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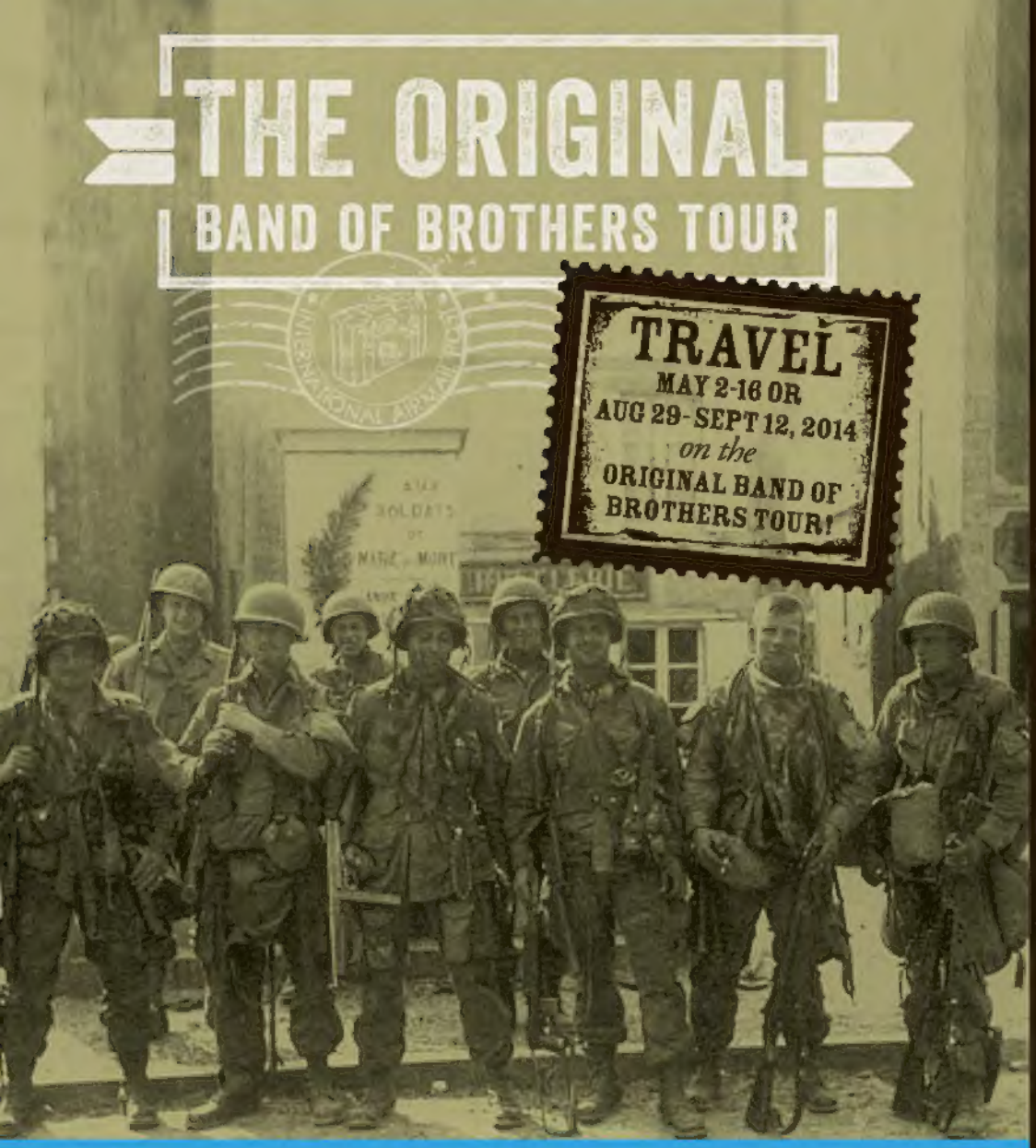

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Cover: Marine PFC Thomas Ellis Underwood photographed during a break in the fighting on Saipan. Underwood served with Company B, 24th Marines, and was later killed on Iwo Jima. See story page 44.
Photo: © Bettmann/Corbis

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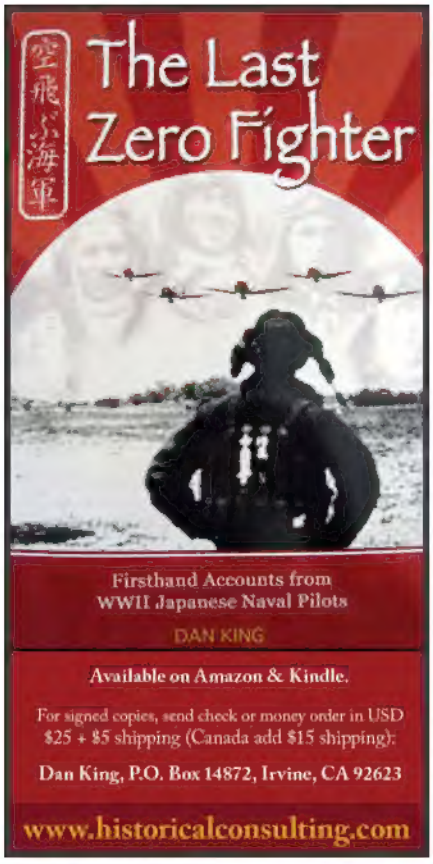

Editorial

Stolen Nazi art recovered in Munich creates a sensation.

RECLUSIVE 80-YEAR-OLD CORNELIUS GURLITT KEPT HIS SECRET FOR NEARLY 70 years. Apparently, in February 2012, a treasure trove of paintings confiscated or stolen by the Nazis was recovered in the old man's Munich apartment. For reasons that remain unclear, however, the German authorities kept the discovery and recovery quiet for nearly two years.

Lion Tamer

Evidence seems to indicate that Gurlitt's father was under the watchful eye of the Nazis during the 1930s and 1940s because he was one quarter Jewish. According to the *New York Times*, the racially discriminatory Nuremberg Laws were in effect and cost Hildebrand Gurlitt two positions with German museums. Despite his "racial impurity," Hildebrand Gurlitt served the Nazis by selling confiscated works of art that were either deemed non-Aryan or degenerate by the Nazi regime. The sales produced revenue for the Nazi government. He also is reported to have been involved in the disposition of some artwork at extremely low prices that Jewish owners were desperate to sell.

Under the Nazis, Hildebrand Gurlitt amassed a fantastic collection of art including works by such artists as Picasso, Matisse, and Renaissance engraver Albrecht Dürer. When detained and questioned by American authorities in 1945, Gurlitt explained that his art collection had been destroyed by Allied bombing of his apartment building in the city of Dresden.

Decades later, the Gurlitt secret came to light when Hildebrand's son, Cornelius, was questioned by Bavarian customs agents aboard a train en route from Switzerland. Cornelius was carrying the equivalent of $12,500 in crisp, new 500 Euro notes. When German tax authorities raided his Munich apartment, they found hundreds of boxes of pasta, jars of jam, and containers of fruit juice and discovered approximately 1,500 paintings along with a number of empty frames, suggesting that Gurlitt had lived in the apartment for years and sold off paintings as needed to raise cash.

One of the paintings that Cornelius sold in recent years was *Lion Tamer* by the German artist Max Beckmann. Sold by a Cologne auction house, the painting fetched $1.17 million. Interestingly, when *Lion Tamer* was sold, the heirs of Alfred Flechtheim, a Jewish art gallery owner who fled Nazi Germany and died penniless in London in 1937, shared in the proceeds. That transaction seems to have been concluded quietly, raising few questions if any from the auction house or anyone else involved.

The Nazis systematically seized private collections and looted museums across Germany and in occupied countries, and any disposition or return of the stolen or cheaply sold art to previous owners is likely to take years. Further, there is a legal issue looming for descendants of former owners who might consider claims. Are they entitled to compensation or return of the property if their relative did in fact sell the artwork—whether or not they were under duress?

Meanwhile, Cornelius Gurlitt may still be under investigation for tax evasion, and he seems to be eliciting little sympathy from his cousin, Ekkheart Gurlitt, who told Bloomberg News that Cornelius is a "real oddball." Even so, Ekkheart went on to say that Cornelius and his father should have pleased collectors by preserving the paintings rather than allowing them to be destroyed by the Nazis.

As more details of this intriguing and bizarre situation surface, the heirs of those who lost these treasures long ago may depend heavily on the goodwill of Gurlitt if they are to make any recovery. According to German law, a 30-year statute of limitations exists. Further complicating things is a law under which the individual who possesses property for at least 10 years gains ownership of it unless he is judged to have acted in bad faith. At least a generation removed, such would be difficult to prove in court.

Michael E. Haskew

WWII HISTORY

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CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

MICHAEL E. HASKEW
Editor

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Cleve C. Barkley, Keith Buchanan, Richard A. Beranty, John Emmert, David H. Lippman, Joseph Luster, Jamie Malanowski, Christopher Miskimon, Durk Steed, Blaine Taylor, Bastiaan Willems

ADVERTISING OFFICE:
BEN BOYLES
Advertising Manager
(570) 322-7848, ext. 110
benjaminb@sovhomestead.com

Advertising Sales
LINDA GALLIHER
(570) 322-7848, ext. 160
lgalliher@sovhomestead.com

MARK HINTZ
Chief Executive Officer

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

BROOKE BLEE
Subscription Customer Service
sovereign@publishersserviceassociates.com
(570) 322-7848, ext. 164

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By John Emmert

National Archives

Forgotten Substitute

The M1903 Springfield rifle remained in wide use during and after World War II.

DECADES OF FEATURE FILMS AND YEARS OF VIDEO GAMES HAVE CREATED AN image of the World War II American GI and Marine slugging it out against Axis foes with the M1 Garand semiautomatic rifle and the Thompson submachine gun, with the occasional M1 carbine thrown in for good measure. However, American troops, even well into 1944, could still be found carrying a vestige of early 20th century small arms technology, the bolt action M1903 Springfield rifle. Adopted long before most of the World War II generation was born, the M1903 was the designated substitute rifle if the M1 Garand was not available.

The Rifle Caliber .30 Model 1903 was adopted as the standard U.S. military rifle in 1903. Based on the Mauser manually operated bolt action rifle designed and produced in Germany, the M1903 was a five shot weapon with a 24-inch barrel intended to serve as a standard rifle for all services in an era when many countries issued long rifles to the infantry and short carbines for artillery and cavalry troops.

However, the M1903 was modified in increments over the following three years before its final configuration was decided upon. The original, integral rod bayonet was replaced in 1905 with a 16-inch sword bayonet design. Also, the graduated ramp rear sight mounted on the barrel just ahead of the receiver was replaced with a folding ladder rear sight in the same location but more applicable to long range target shooting. Last, the M1903 received a modified chamber to shoot the newly developed .30-06 cartridge.

Manufactured by the government arsenals at Springfield, Massachusetts, and Rock Island, Illinois, the M1903 was unofficially referred to as the Springfield, continuing in a long line of Springfield Armory designed shoulder arms. It was, however, the subject of a controversial legal battle between the U.S. government and the German Mauser company, which resulted in the U.S. paying damages to Mauser, even after World War I.

The M1903 had not been available in the numbers required during World War I. Even though production had been increased significantly, the U.S. Army was forced to seek more rifles elsewhere. The M1917 rifle, a British design built under license by Winchester and Remington, was issued in .30-06 and saw action in large numbers overseas. However, military politics played in the M1903's favor and it remained the standard rifle after the war.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, John C. Garand, a Springfield Armory employee, sought to produce a practical, simple, weapon which could, as Alexander Rose described in his book American Rifle, with the mere pulling of the trigger "allow the rifleman to pull it again."

The M1903, together with other bolt action rifles, require the user to frequently break his view of the sights to operate the bolt after firing each shot. Even with a skilled operator, the step of gaining a sight picture after being forced to break off, taking the slack out of the trigger, breathing, firing, operating the bolt, and repeating requires a certain amount of discipline and proper training. Considering that in the heat of battle the fact that even the best shots will fail to connect with their enemy in a stressful environment, and the operational simplicity of a semiautomatic rifle could appeal to a lot of military thinkers.

With a semiautomatic, the operator takes up a sight picture, breathes, presses the trigger, waits for his sights to come back on target, and allows the trigger to reset for the next shot. Also, semiautomatic rifles tend to have less recoil due to the mechanism soaking up much of the rearward impulses. This simpler battery of arms also brought with it the fact that the effective rate of fire was limited only by the skills and trigger finger of the shooter.

However, semiautomatics were

During a pause in the action near the town of Valletri, Italy, on May 29, 1944, Pfc. Edward J. Foley of the 143rd Infantry Regiment, 36th Division, cleans his Springfield M1903A4 sniper rifle. The remarkable service life of the M1903 rifle extended through the Vietnam era and beyond.

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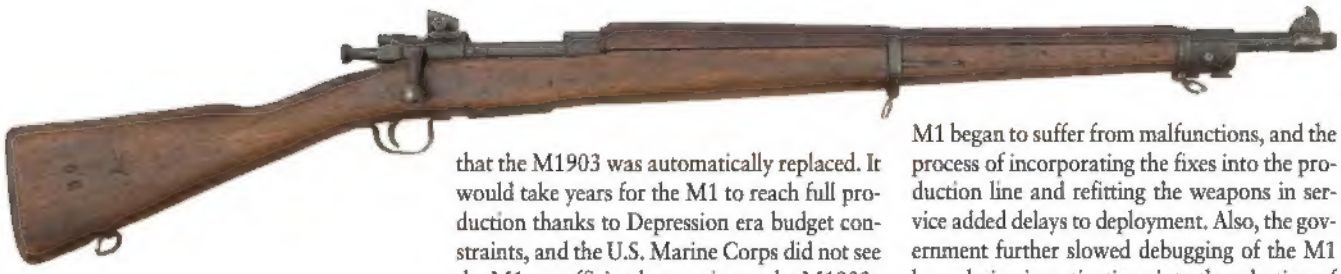

more complex and expensive, and senior military officials believed that issuing such weapons would result in poor fire discipline and wastage of ammunition. Furthermore, early attempts to produce a semiautomatic rifle for general issue had resulted in portly, underdeveloped weapons that were inaccurate and unreliable. The merit of the bolt action was its mechanical simplicity. A bolt action like the M1903 could be fired and loaded indefinitely, hinging only on how quickly the operator would become fatigued.

By the mid 1930s, the United States Army, however, had evaluated John Garand's service rifle, an eight-shot semiautomatic, which, although heavier than the Springfield, showed the promise of shaking the reputation of preceding designs. In 1936, after a series of tests and evaluations, the Garand was standardized as the Rifle Caliber .30 M1. This did not mean that the M1903 was automatically replaced. It would take years for the M1 to reach full production thanks to Depression era budget constraints, and the U.S. Marine Corps did not see the M1 as sufficiently superior to the M1903.

The M1903 handles slightly better than the M1 due to roughly a pound difference in official stated weight, 8.7 pounds compared to 9.5. However, the M1 was designed with some economy in mind, with the intent being to share as much equipment with the M1903 as was possible. The M1 was designed to take the M1905 bayonet used with the M1903, its clip size of eight rounds was the maximum capacity possible while still being able to use ammo belts issued with the M1903. Although this mindset did prohibit the M1 from possessing more radical features such as a detachable magazine, it likely worked out for the best considering the course of the war. Troops transitioning to the M1 would only have to trade in their old rifles.

The M1 was not perfect. Shortly after adoption and the initiation of full production, the M1 began to suffer from malfunctions, and the process of incorporating the fixes into the production line and refitting the weapons in service added delays to deployment. Also, the government further slowed debugging of the M1 by ordering investigations into the selection of the M1, and some called for further competitions to determine if there were better rifle designs. When war broke out in Europe in 1939, it was clear that the United States would have to rearm within two or three years in order to meet the threat.

The Marines were adamant that the M1903 suited their needs. In November, 1940, the Marines held a series of trials in which the M1 and the M1903 were subjected to an abusive, all out torture test including being exposed to both salt and fresh water, sand, and a complete immersion in mud. Not surprisingly, the M1 failed to pass the rigorous test, which was rigged in the M1903's favor. To the Marine's chagrin, they did find that the M1 compared favorably to the M1903 in terms of accuracy. The Marine prejudice against the autoloader would only die on a far away Pacific island, in

one of the most intense campaigns of the war.

As Europe was engulfed in the Nazi onslaught, the U.S. military faced a severe shortage of small arms. The institution of the draft in 1939 and increased military funding meant that there were more men coming into the ranks than the military had anticipated. The military had only just fixed the flaws in the M1's operating system, but even supplying Winchester with a contract to build the new semiautomatic rifle would not be enough. It would take time for the Springfield Armory and Winchester to streamline and speed up production rates. However, the tooling that had been used to manufacture M1903s at Rock Island was still in existence, and in November of 1941, Remington began producing M1903s using that tooling.

The early Remington M1903s were made to the high quality standards that had been expected of the M1903 since production had previously ceased in the 1920s. However, production rates were low due in part to worn tooling and in part because the rifles were made to production standards that were frankly too high. In early 1942, Remington began to integrate shortcuts in productions, substituting stampings and limiting machining operations where possible, creating the M1903M. Also, the flat gray parkerized finish replaced the glossy black parkerizing that had been used previously, as would become common throughout American wartime firearms production. However, the M model was still not simplified enough.

National Archives

ABOVE: Tis the season to decorate firearms. Privates Kotula and Queen of the U.S. Army hang Christmas stockings on Springfield M1903 rifles at Camp Lee, Virginia, in December 1941. **OPPOSITE:** The M1903 Springfield rifle entered service with an element of controversy. The U.S. government eventually paid royalties to the German Mauser company for infringement on patents to the German rifle.

The M1903A3 was implemented by Remington and adopted by the military in May 1942 to create a serviceable yet cheaper rifle. Gone were the match grade target sights that had characterized the M1903. Instead, the 1903A3 featured a rear aperture sight mounted on the rear of the receiver, the furthest range setting being 400 yards. Also, the magazine well and trigger guard were now a single piece made from stampings and welded together. In 1942, Smith Corona Typewriter was assigned a contract to supplement Remington's output of the M1903A3

When the United States entered World War II in December 1941, the troops in the Philippines were largely equipped with M1903s, although a few M1s were in the hands of U.S. troops before the surrender on Bataan and elsewhere in the islands. For many who joined up both before and after Pearl Harbor, the first weapon they were issued was often the M1903.

Robert Edlin, a National Guardsman who had joined his outfit in 1939, said, "That '03 rifle kicked like a mule...." Even regulars in

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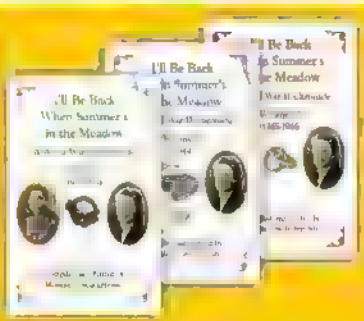

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prestigious outfits like the 1st Infantry Division, "The Big Red One," were forced to make due. Directly assigned to his unit at the end of 1940, Bill Willis joined the 1st Division and still had to face shortages. "We qualified on the rifle range with the Springfield '03," he recalled in a later interview.

There were still those in the Army who resisted replacing the M1903 with the M1, old sergeants who did not want to change over to the M1 and did their best to bad mouth the weapon in front of the troops. The attitude was likely as poor, if not worse, among old salts in the Marines. Despite the fact that the Marine Corps had bowed to the inevitable and officially adopted the M1 just as America joined the war, it would take more than a year for the M1 to be issued to the Leathernecks.

The 1st Marine Division was deployed overseas in the summer of 1942 in preparation to strike the first blow against the Japanese, the M1903 being the ubiquitous rifle. The Marines, both wartime and prewar, were quick to realize that their weapon of choice had a major drawback: its slow rate of fire. The Guadalcanal campaign, which began in August 1942, would pit the reinforced 1st Marine Division against the Japanese Army in a struggle over Henderson Field, the airbase seized to keep the Japanese from completing it.

Over the course of the battle, the Marines faced several hours-long Japanese "Banzai" night attacks, thankfully blunted or stopped due to the presence of the Browning M1917 .30-caliber water cooled machine guns around the perimeter. The Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) was also present on the squad level, but the average Marine in place along the line during such an intensive, all out assault would have been frantically operating the bolt of his rifle, praying that the machine guns on either side of him kept functioning or that the gun crew was not killed.

Patrols beyond the perimeter were fraught with danger, especially since the M1917 was far from being easily man portable. The arrival of U.S. Army units on the island to reinforce the Marines in later stages of the battle brought more than reinforcements. The firepower at the Army's disposal on the individual soldier's level was advertised to the Marines when the 2nd Battalion, 164th Infantry launched a counterattack on the far left of the 7th Marines during the Battle of Bloody Ridge.

As Eric Hammel wrote in his book, Starvation Island, "Light, medium, and heavy machine guns, and hundreds of new Garand rifles lashed back and forth along the shattered lines of men emerging from the carnage of the anti-tank fire. The Japanese never really got close to the Timboe's Guardsmen, so telling were the American defensive fires." After that demonstration, there was no going back for the Marines. It was not until well into 1943 that the M1 was on hand in sufficient numbers to replace all M1903s, and several photos exist showing the M1903 in use well into that year.

A number of 101st Airborne Division paratroopers sit aboard their Waco glider in early 1944. These troopers carry a variety of weapons, including the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), bazooka,

Further use of the M1903 was made in the squad support role as a grenade launching rifle. Using a special fitting clamped on the muzzle of a rifle, a finned adapter for a hand grenade, and a special blank cartridge, a grenadier could launch a bomb far further than he could throw it. It took ordinance time to develop a launcher for the M1, and even when it did the M1 was incapable of firing semi-automatic with the device fitted. Also, the en-bloc clip system meant that it was far more cumbersome to load the special blank in the M1 than the M1903, keeping the M1903 in service longer.

Even though the M1 was popular, the M1903 could still be found in large numbers in areas that had far lower priority. Italy and Burma were places where the M1903 was in widespread use well into 1944. Also, photographs exist showing troops reaching France after D-Day with an M1903 slung over their shoulder.

The U.S. military entered the war lacking a dedicated sniper rifle. During World War II, the typical solution to any lack of a sniper rifle was to equip a standard service rifle with a commercially available scope. The U.S. was no different in this regard. The M1, however did not readily adapt to a scope due to the top loading and ejection of its en-bloc clip. Also, demand for the M1 was simply too high to warrant sidelining significant numbers of them for modification and issue to snipers when the needs of regular infantrymen could not be met.

The U.S. Army chose the M1903A3 as the base platform to be used as a sniper weapon. The sights were removed, bolt replaced with a modified design capable of clearing a scope, and a variation of the Weaver 330 scope mounted atop the action. The ensemble was designated the M1903A4 (Sniper's). Interestingly, the A3 markings were not removed from the rifle, kept in case the rifles as they were manufactured did not meet the standards of accuracy required.

The A4 was not readily liked by soldiers or the few Marines who were issued it. As could be expected due to the nature of the build, many were not what they could have been in terms of both accuracy and the durability of the scope. With the rushed nature of A3 production at Remington decades before precise production methods were discovered and implemented, barrel quality would have most certainly varied. To expect match grade accuracy out of such a weapon would have been unfair to the rifle.

The scope was likely a huge complaint. The

Weaver 330 scope features a large, distracting reticule in the middle of a very narrow tube, and for the soldier the firing experience is something like looking through a straw. Low magnification and a narrow field of view would not have been atypical of the era, but even the Russian M91/30 sniper rifle's PU scope has a slightly better field of view.

Perhaps the worst feature was the lack of iron sights. It has only been within the last couple of decades that scope technology has reached the point where magnified and electronic sights are in widespread use by frontline combat troops. The sort of durability that allows modern snipers to work without any iron sights with confidence did not exist. However, the M1903A4 was not an outrageous failure, and with optics chosen for the M1 sniper variants produced after the war could be found in Korea and afterward.

The Marines chose a far different approach when building their own sniper rifle. Using M1903A1 National Match rifles or other M1903s that showed promising accuracy, the armorers mounted an eight power Unertl target scope, leaving the iron sights on the rifle. Given no official designation, the rifle was simply referred to as the M1903A1 Unertl. The 8x scope was, however, given several inches of free travel to mitigate the effect recoil would have on the fragile instrument. As a result, the scope would have to be pulled back between each shot for the user to get a proper view of the reticule. The combination was not ideal but doubtlessly more consistently accurate than the A4.

The M1903 Springfield was the last in a long line of American shoulder arms to bear the name of the Springfield arsenal. It held the line during some of the darkest days of World War II, relegated to serve in the shadow of its replacement, the M1 Garand. In training and on the battlefield, the Springfield served quietly until the war ended and the remaining stocks were sold on the civilian market. Their availability, though, did provide many a youth growing up in the decades after World War II with a cheap, reliable, and durable rifle for hunting and recreation. They still show themselves in vintage target matches with old contemporaries from abroad, where men and women, young and old vie for local bragging rights in friendly sport. Perhaps it is a fitting retirement for the forgotten substitute.

John Emmert is a student graduating Thomas Edison State College with a degree in history. Hailing from Oregon, he has taken part in a number of high-power and vintage military rifle competitions. John operates a small historical blog and has finished his first historical novel.

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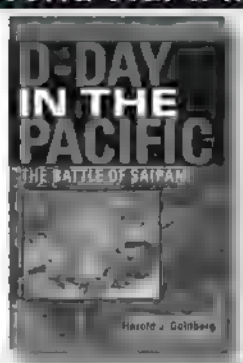

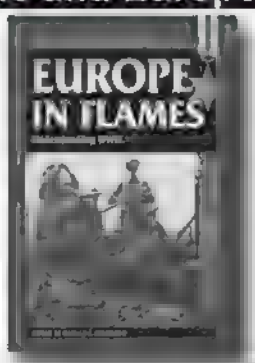

By Blaine Taylor

All photos: Blaine Taylor

Hitler's Vassal?

Nicholas Horthy, regent of Hungary, the vaunted admiral without a fleet, was much more than that.

THE CAREER OF ADMIRAL NICHOLAS HORTHY SPANNED NOT ONLY TWO WORLD wars, but also stretched across the decades from the age of sail to atomic-powered submarines. He witnessed the fall of Europe's oldest dynasties during 1917-1919, the rise of dictatorships to replace them, and the advent and then collapse of fascism as well.

His own country, Hungary, twice fell victim to Soviet revolution and foreign occupation, and he lived long enough to witness the aborted Hungarian Revolt of 1956. Although he did not survive to see her free once more, this salty sailor predicted that Hungary would emerge again in his post-World War II memoirs.

He was one of only two of Adolf Hitler's former Axis partners in Europe to survive World War II. Both Benito Mussolini of Italy and Marshal Ion Antonescu of Romania were executed by the communists, while King Boris of Bulgaria died of a mysterious heart attack in 1943. Croatian strongman Dr. Ante Pavelic, like Admiral Horthy, escaped.

Nicholas Horthy outlived them all as the deposed regent of Hungary, a former Imperial Austro-Hungarian Navy commander in chief who was head of state in a landlocked nation virtually without a fleet. A reluctant politician who had been first a career sailor all his life, Horthy had served as aide-de-camp to the Dual Monarchy's Kaiser Franz Josef for the five years preceding the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

In that capacity, he rubbed shoulders with kings, sultans, and the emperor of Germany, and later would hobnob with Victor Emmanuel III of the House of Savoy, Pope Pius XII, and the Fuhrer of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler. It was Hitler who dominated the last years of Horthy's 25-year regency, and Horthy thus has come down to history as a mere vassal to Hitler, but he was much more than that.

Horthy rose from being an unknown naval cadet at Pola on the Adriatic Sea in the 1880s to command the Austro-Hungarian fleet in 1918. He was appointed to that post by Austria's last Emperor, Kaiser Karl I, a man whose return to power he would thwart in 1921. Forced to surrender his proud, undefeated vessels to newly formed Yugoslavia on October 31, 1918, Horthy saw his naval career give way to one in a field he had always avoided, politics.

Within just a few months, the victor of the Battle of Otranto would be acclaimed as the national hero of his native land for the liberation of Budapest from the communist takeover led by Bela Kun. And as the elected regent of Hungary, he would reside in the former royal palace in the formidable Burgberg. Offered the crown himself, Admiral Horthy refused it, preferring to rule instead as an elected dictator. He was one of the few admirals in history who came to office at the head of an army rather than a fleet.

Caught between two powerful neighbors, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, Horthy's Hungary threw in her lot with the Nazis against the Bolsheviks when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, but was seeking a way out of the conflict as early as the following year, convinced that the Third Reich would lose the war. Reportedly, Horthy was one of the few foreign leaders whom Hitler respected, and why not? By the time Hitler was born, Horthy was already an Imperial Navy officer.

Resplendent in the uniform of a Hungarian Navy admiral, Nicholas Horthy strides with Adolf Hitler from a platform after a formal event. The pragmatic Horthy commanded respect from Hitler and received greater latitude than other nominal heads of state who served the Nazis.

While Hitler was an unknown corporal in the trenches on the Western Front in 1917, the admiral was the naval hero of Austria-Hungary, and when the demobilized future Fuhrer was a struggling politician in Bavaria, Nicholas Horthy was elected

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regent by a landslide vote of 131 out of 141 ballots cast in the parliament at Budapest.

Moreover, Hitler only traveled to countries he occupied, while mariner Horthy had long since sailed the oceans of the world. Thus, both before and during World War II the crusty sailor stood up to Hitler in a way that few Axis Pact partners dared. In return, the Fuhrer may have murdered the regent's first son. He did send SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny to kidnap the second son, occupied Hungary with nine German divisions late in 1944, and imprisoned the deposed regent, his former ally, in a Bavarian castle.

It was there that the 78-year-old admiral narrowly escaped execution by SS bullets in the spring of 1945 when the U.S. Army liberated the Horthy family outside Munich. Protected from extradition on Josip Broz Tito's demand to stand trial in Yugoslavia for alleged war crimes, the regent instead was saved by the American government to testify as a witness in both 1945 and 1948 at the war crimes trials conducted in Nuremberg by the International Military Tribunal.

Over the course of his rich and varied life, Horthy had married the best dancer he ever met, hunted tigers in Borneo, seen the Himalayas, gotten drunk in Spanish ports, and survived a 70-foot fall from the mast of an Austrian training ship. His life was truly an epic.

It was an unusual saga, beginning with his birth in Hungary in 1868 to a family of landed gentry tracing its lineage back several centuries. Young Horthy's dream was almost instantly to go to sea as a career sailor, but it almost was not realized because an older brother had died at the Imperial Navy's Academy at Pola. In 1882, his parents reluctantly granted him permission to seek entrance

Years later, Horthy recalled that of 612 applicants to the academy only 42 were admitted as officer candidates, and of those only 27 were later commissioned. The future admiral adopted as his own lifelong slogan the motto of the naval academy: "Above Life Stands Duty."

As a graduated midshipman, young Horthy was assigned to the Winter Squadron flagship *Radetzky*, a frigate named after a famous Austrian Army field marshal. The ships were still powered by sails, with steam boilers hardly ever stoked, including the armor-clad vessels. Skippers who still felt more comfortable sailing thus preferred going into harbors under sail, rather than employing the newer steam power of a more modern era

The future regent graduated from sailing vessels to torpedo boats and would later command both armored cruisers and battleships as well. Overall, his many voyages over the course of 36 years would take him to England, France, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Malta, Gibraltar, Tunisia, Greece, Egypt, Somalia, Thailand, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Italy, and the Solomon Islands, to name but a few places.

Horthy joined the torpedo service of the Imperial Navy, preferring it, he said, to the other three possibilities: the desk-bound naval staff, minelaying, and heavy surface units. Staying ever longer on sea exercises, it meant faster and more promotions, Horthy later asserted.

Following his command of both a training ship and the school that prepared young boys as future naval petty officers, Horthy found himself serving as a government translator in Vienna. He translated the naval budget from German into Hungarian for the joint parliamentary review in Budapest, as provided for in the 1867 constitution between Hungary and Austria.

Shortly afterward, he met his future wife, Magda Purgly, at a dance, and they were married on July 21, 1901. The happy union would endure war, revolution, overthrow, arrest, and exile, as well as having their homes looted by Romanians, Hungarians, and Russians.

Horthy's rise in the Navy was swift. From skippering a torpedo boat, he next commanded

a destroyer flotilla, and then the battleship *Habsburg*, flagship of the fleet's Mediterranean Squadron, before World War I. One of his colleagues in the Navy was another admiral, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who insisted on promoting the offensive capabilities of the Imperial Navy, not only its role as a coastal defense force. It was he whose assassination at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, touched off the Balkan powder keg, which soon spread to a general European conflict.

Horthy was twice stationed at Constantinople in Turkey, where he witnessed the famous Young Turk rising that overthrew the old sultan. When Austria took advantage of the crisis and annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Turks responded by boycotting and seizing imported Austrian commercial goods as well as refusing to allow cargo to be unloaded. Since Turkey was Austria's main customer for exports, Horthy decided to act to break the impasse.

When the nervous Austrian ambassador asked what Horthy would do if fired upon, he coolly replied that he would return the fire, even if it meant war. All went well, however, Horthy recalled in the 1950s, as the Kurds declined to fight. The sailor had learned that bold, decisive action provided results, a lesson he remembered during World War I.

Admiral Nicholas Horthy astride his white horse greets an approving throng following the victory of his anti-communist Hungarian Army of Liberation, which defeated a leftist uprising led by Bela Kun in 1919. Horthy, already a war hero, was also elevated to the post of regent of Hungary.

This action as well as his reports to Vienna on the Young Turks brought him to the attention of the aged Emperor Franz Josef, and in 1909 Horthy was named the monarch's naval aide-de-camp, a high point in his celebrated career.

Decades later, Admiral Horthy still recalled with awe his first meeting with the Austrian Kaiser. As a boy, Horthy heard the king-

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emperor mentioned only as a near godlike figure, but now meeting him in person in an Austrian Army general's uniform, he witnessed a man of grace and dignity stepping forward quietly to meet his new aide.

In retrospect, Horthy never forgot the regal impression that Kaiser Franz Josef made on him, and long afterward he recalled it as the greatest moment of his long life.

When the world war broke, Horthy had been promoted captain of a ship of the line and traveled to Vienna to report to naval headquarters, where the next day he was received by the Archduke Charles, the new heir apparent to the throne of Austria-Hungary. Asked if it would be war or peace, Horthy accurately predicted the outbreak of World War I, and the future kaiser wrongly contradicted him.

At the start of the war, Horthy was named once more to command the aging, slow, and underarmed *Habsburg*, but soon was given the just completed armored cruiser *Novara*. In her, Horthy broke through the Allied naval blockade of the Adriatic Sea to help the submarine *U-8* escape through the Straits of Otranto, thereby forcing the British Royal Navy to redistribute its surface units.

When Italy entered the war in 1915 on the side of the Allies, within hours the entire Imperial Navy was steaming to attack the Italian east coast from Venice to Brindisi. Horthy's job was to delay the Italian advance by interdicting the Italian railway system along the Adriatic, thereby giving the Austro-Hungarian forces time to move to the border where few battalions were posted, opening the road to Vienna.

The Italians, afraid of a landing at Ancona and an assault on Rome in their armies' rear, halted their advance. Horthy had achieved his goal.

Commanding the *Novara* and the destroyer *Scharfschutze*, Captain Horthy put out of action a coastal signal station and its protecting shore battery, which placed a few hits on one of his ships during his first combat of the Great War. Once, he almost succeeded in intercepting King Peter of Serbia on an Allied destroyer, only to discover that the ruler abandoned the projected voyage because of seasickness.

Horthy's next venture, through one of his officer's decoding skills, was more successful, enabling his ships to sink 23 steamers and sailing ships on a night raid on the port of San Giovanni di Medua, an Albanian harbor occupied by the Serbs.

The port hosted a battery of 10 guns. Hugging the rugged Albanian coast until the breakwater was taken, Horthy saw a single-story dwelling housing the sleeping gun crews. A single salvo blew it up, thus also putting its battery out of action. Overjoyed, Horthy and his men beheld a harbor full of ships that had arrived the night before by sheer happenstance.

Had they come a day earlier, they would have found an empty harbor; a day afterward, and most of the cargo would have already been unloaded. Giving the crews time to leave their vessels, he opened fire on them.

The Central Powers began unrestricted submarine warfare against the Allies on February 1, 1917, and Horthy found that the Straits of Otranto must be forced if the submarines were to be successful against Allied merchant vessels. His recommendation for such a battle was accepted by the higher command, and so the stage was set for the Battle of Otranto of May 15, 1917, to allow 32 German and 14 Austrian submarines to escape.

Horthy's flotilla faced a combined British-Italian-French force. He was wounded by a shell that exploded nearby at 10:10 AM, with five shell splinters embedding themselves in one of his legs. In addition, a piece of shrapnel weighing a couple of pounds whisked Horthy's cap off his head. Later a piece of metal with the singed shreds of his naval officer's cap still adhering to it was handed to him. Remarkably, he did not suffer a single burn. However, he did feel as if he had been knocked over by a blow to the head with an axe

Horthy continued to command the action, however, from a stretcher placed on the *Novara*'s bridge, but a direct hit put her out of action less than a half hour later. The battle appeared to be lost when Horthy asked a junior officer to examine the situation with a pair of binoculars. The startled officer proclaimed that it seemed to him that the enemy ships were turning tail and retreating. They had.

What had happened to give Horthy such an unexpected victory at seemingly his moment of bitter defeat? Aboard the leading British cruiser, an Italian admiral thought better of engaging the Austro-Hungarian battle cruiser *St. Georg*, as it was backed up by the coastal patrol vessel *Budapest*, thus opting to allow *Novara* to escape.

Horthy's three cruisers had faced one Italian and two British cruisers along with 11 Italian and three French destroyers. He had destroyed 23 net-trailing antisubmarine drifters, two transports, two destroyers, and one aircraft. He had not lost a single vessel and had opened the straits.

The Battle of Otranto made Horthy a national hero in Austria, leading the new 29-year-old Kaiser Karl to name him both a rear admiral and commander in chief of the Fleet over the heads of many older, more senior officers in the final year of the war, with both defeat and mutiny looming. Discovering one plot by two sailors to murder the officers while a ship was at sea, Horthy had the mutineers hanged in sight of delegations of others from around the fleet, but knew that this would not prevent a general revolt.

ABOVE: Photographed during World War II, Nicholas Horthy did his best to protect Hungarian interests under the mounting pressure to serve Hitler and the Nazi regime. BELOW: Standing beside Hitler as the Führer delivers a stiff Nazi salute, Admiral Nicholas Horthy of Hungary watches elements of the German Navy pass in review in August 1938.

His answer was to take the idle ships and crews to sea for renewed action, but by late 1918 even this would not stave off an inevitable defeat brought about by the reverses on land. On October 26, Emperor Karl informed his ally Kaiser Wilhelm that the dual monarchy was dropping out of the war and would seek an armistice with the Allies.

Kaiser Karl was convinced by Croat generals

to surrender his proud fleet to the Yugoslavians to keep it from falling to the hated Italians. Thus, it was Horthy's sad duty to haul down both his own pennant as admiral and also the ensign of the doomed empire. On October 31, 1918, his naval career abruptly came to an end.

The next day, his flagship, the battleship *Viribus Unitis*, was sunk by a mine placed on her by two Italian frogmen. His successor as naval commander went down with her.

Horthy and his wife lost their home at Pola and all the belongings they had accumulated over 17 years of marriage. This was the house he had built in which all their children had been born. They departed with his officers on a special train, his career in ruins, it seemed. What could he look forward to in Hungary, a country in the throes of revolution?

Hungary's neighbors, the Czechs, Serbs, and Romanians, had each taken chunks of the country, all sanctioned by the victorious Western Allies. At home, on March 21, 1919, the domestic leftist factions united to form a Soviet-style Republic of Hungary. The Romanians advanced, unrestrained by France and Britain, further into prostrate Hungary. Demands for a counterrevolution set in, and Horthy was asked to form a national army of liberation.

He did so, and on November 16, 1919, Horthy entered Budapest on a white horse at the head of his troops, launching a white terror that eradicated Hungarian communism for the next generation. Since the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had been dissolved and Hungary still considered herself a kingdom without a king, the parliament voted that a regency should be established until a monarch would once more sit on the throne at Budapest.

Because the Allies would not allow the restoration of the Habsburg dynasty in any form, two former archdukes were immediately disqualified for the post of regent.

Horthy, however, as both a non-Habsburg and a native Magyar who was also a national hero, filled the bill perfectly. Thus, on March 1, 1920, he was elected the first regent of Hungary since 1452, a post that he asserted he neither sought nor wanted.

This was called into question, though, the following year when the deposed Kaiser Karl twice attempted a comeback. On the first occasion, the ex-emperor's former naval commander held a secret meeting at the palace, and on the second wrote him a personal letter, begging him to leave the country to spare it both civil war and foreign invasion. On both occasions, the former emperor heeded Horthy's entreaties. Karl died the following year of pneumonia at age 34 in exile on the Portuguese island of Madeira.

Horthy, too, would die in exile, at age 90 in 1957 at Estoril in Portugal, but not before recovering Hungary's lands lost at the end of World War I from the hands of Hitler. His first meeting with the German Führer was in 1936 at Berchtesgaden in Bavaria.

The sailor's first impression was that Hitler was a moderate and wise statesman, and he later admitted that he was not the only leader so mistaken.

By the time of Horthy's triumphal state visit to the Third Reich during August 24-26, 1938, the regent found the Führer a changed man, visibly and audibly behaving as the master of Europe. Hitler briefly sketched for Horthy his design to absorb Czechoslovakia, his aim being to smash the Czechs.

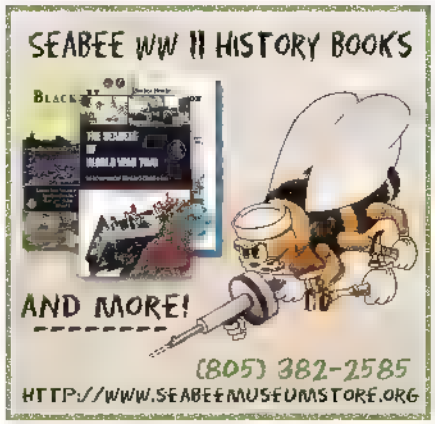
Three years later, Horthy was still Hitler's ally, however, as he visited Hitler's East Prussian headquarters, from which the invasion of the Soviet Union was being conducted. Hungarian troops fought at Stalingrad, but by then Horthy realized the war was lost and was seeking a way out.

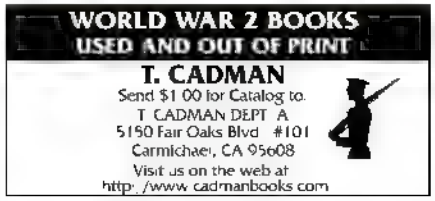
Two spring meetings with Hitler at Castle Klessheim in Austria, in both 1943 and 1944, proved acrimonious. At the second, the Führer demanded the establishment of a pro-German protectorate in Hungary, and an angry Horthy stormed out of the conference room, an act that Hitler had never before encountered. He ran after his irate guest and persuaded him to stay on as regent.

By October 1944, Horthy had decided on an armistice with Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union, as well as with the West, to prevent a Soviet invasion of Hungary. It was not to be, though, as the German SS kidnapped his son and placed the regent under arrest, shipping him and his family to exile at Castle Hirschberg outside Munich until the end of the war. Hitler ordered Horthy's execution, but the coming of the U.S. Army caused his Gestapo and SS jailers to flee in civilian clothes on May 1, 1945.

Hungary was, indeed, invaded by the Red Army. Budapest was captured after a devastating two-month siege on February 13, 1945, and her armies surrendered that April. As for Regent Admiral Horthy, he went to his death believing that this second communist yoke would eventually be thrown off. In 1989, he was proven correct as democracy was established 32 years after his death.

Towson, Maryland, freelance writer Blaine Taylor is the author of 11 books on World War II. His latest is Mrs. Adolf Hitler: The Eva Braun Photograph Albums, 1912-45.





By Jamie Malanowski

National Archives

Wartime Silver Salvage

Millions in silver pesos from the Philippine Treasury were recovered from Caballo Bay, but much more may remain on the sea bottom.

EARLY IN THE MORNING OF JULY 8, 1942, IN THE CALM WATERS OF CABALLO Bay south of Corregidor Island in the Philippines, a casco, a 12-foot by 60-foot flat-bottomed wooden diving barge, bobbed placidly in the open water 120 feet above the ocean floor. Standing on its deck was a workforce consisting of 25 men, give or take a couple, an unusual group thrown together by war and opportunity.

On board were Captain Hiro Takiuti, a young Japanese Army engineer who was placed in overall command; Kunichi Yosobe, a middle-aged Japanese civilian salvage expert who had lived many years in the Philippines and whose job it was to manage the operation; and a half-dozen Japanese soldiers, headed by a kempei tai, a large and temperamentally sadistic military policeman whose job was to maintain discipline and whose preferred method was force.

The majority of the laborers consisted of eight Filipino men, pumpers who worked the machine that supplied deep sea divers with the oxygen vital to their continued existence. At one point not long before, eight such divers, Filipino men, had been present on this very barge, but after three of them died sudden and excruciating deaths the rest quit, the kempei tai's threats notwithstanding.

Now, rounding out the group, were six new divers. Veterans of the crew of the USS *Pigeon*, a submarine rescue ship, the men had survived the grueling siege of Corregidor and six harrowing weeks in a succession of prison camps, the last being the notoriously brutal and disease-ridden Cabanatuan, north of Manila. One day they were assigned to the seemingly benign Takiuti, who said he needed divers to help clear Manila Bay of sunken vessels.

The men were happy to have been chosen, relieved to be out of the brutal camp, delighted to be eating reasonably well for the first time in months, and heartened by slightly improved hopes of escape. At the same time, the Americans agonized over the thought that they might be giving aid and assistance to such a hated enemy. This was especially true if, as they suspected, the task had nothing to do with sunken ships and everything to do with sunken treasure.

Aboard the casco, Yosobe explained that, in fact, they would be salvaging sunken cargo and showed the divers the equipment available to them to get the job done. It was a terribly inadequate array: there were several helmets, all designed for diving in shallow water no deeper than 30 feet; a couple dozen suits of heavy diving underwear; superannuated air hoses whose ability to withstand sea pressure and to continuously conduct oxygen to the divers far below the surface was highly suspect; and an ancient hand pump whose capacity to force air on a sustaining basis to a diver at the end of a dodgy umbilical cord 120 feet underwater seemed dubious at best.

The divers complained about the age and near uselessness of the equipment, but discussion was pointless. The Japanese did not have anything better and were not going to invest any time looking for upgrades, so the Americans faced a Hobson's choice. It was either dive with substandard equipment or return to the malnutrition and disease and beatings of Cabanatuan. In reality, there was no choice. Only one option presented an upside. Cooperation offered more of a chance of living; cooperation held out the possibility of hope. The divers said yes.

Boatswain's Mate Virgil Sauers, nicknamed Jughead, was the first to dive. He put on his helmet, connected his air hose and lifeline, and began to lower himself into the water. It was

U.S. Navy sailors aboard the submarine USS *Trout* unload gold and currency from the Philippine Treasury as the Japanese closed in on Manila. In the spring of 1942, a large quantity of silver could not be evacuated and was thrown into the waters of Manila Bay.

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warm at first, but as he slowly descended the sea grew darker and colder. After a while, however, the ocean floor slowly came into focus and the sunken cargo Yosobe had broadly described became more distinct. It was a pile of boxes, 14-inch by 14-inch by 24-inch wooden crates, dozens of them. Most were intact, but many had cracked open, jarring the canvas bags that were inside, loosening the ties that bound them. Spilling from the bags were coins, silver coins, scores and scores of them, hundreds of them, thousands, worth in all likelihood millions of American dollars.

The coins that Sauers saw on that morning were not the ancient relics of Spanish traders or Chinese pirates, but were part of the treasury of the government of the Philippines and had been placed on deposit in Davy Jones' locker only two months before. The fortune had been on the run since late December, after General Masaharu Homma's invasion forces had reached the outskirts of Manila. Just before the government of President Manuel Quezon declared the capital an open city, the treasury was the subject of a dramatic, Dunkirk-like evacuation to Corregidor.

Beleaguered treasury department clerks loaded millions of dollars worth of gold and silver bullion, paper money, bearer bonds, treasury certificates, coins, jewels, and foreign currency into boxes, bags, filing cabinets, footlockers, and other receptacles. These containers were then hauled to the docks and dumped onto the decks of a makeshift flotilla that included tugs, barges, U.S. Navy and U.S. Army vessels, and the presidential yacht *Casiano*, which carried the valuables across the 27 kilometers of Manila Bay to Corregidor, where they were deposited in a large underground complex called the Malinta Tunnels.

There the loot sat until early February, when the submarine USS *Trout* became one of the few ships to slither through the Japanese blockade, delivering 3,500 much-appreciated rounds of antiaircraft ammunition. In need of ballast for its return trip, the empty *Trout* then took on two tons of gold bullion and 18 tons of silver pesos from the volcanic vault and sailed for Australia

Meanwhile, conditions on Bataan and Corregidor deteriorated. Food was rationed, ammunition grew scarce, and the promised relief force never materialized. On March 11, under orders from President Franklin D. Roosevelt, General Douglas MacArthur evacuated the islands. Four weeks later, on April 9, the American and Filipino forces on Bataan surrendered, which freed the Japanese to concentrate all their firepower

National Archives

TOP: Silver coins such as these found a temporary resting place on the bottom of Manila Bay. ABOVE: One of the U.S. Navy divers who worked to salvage the Filipino silver in Manila Bay, Robert Sheats published his experience in a book titled *One Man's War: Diving as a Guest of the Emperor*. In this photo, Sheats poses with a copy of the shallow water helmet used by the American divers.

on Corregidor, whose defenders were gallant but utterly bereft of air or sea defenses. Realizing that surrender was both inevitable and imminent, General Jonathan Wainright ordered the destruction of everything of value—ammunition, weapons, documents, and, of course, the treasury of the Philippines.

A raging bonfire took care of the paper money and government securities; seldom had people with money to burn rid themselves of it so joylessly. But that left between 14 and 17 million silver pesos, each about the size of a U.S. silver dollar and worth about 60 cents in American money, with a total weight of 390 tons.

The treasure would have to be sunk. Caballo Bay was the obvious choice, since Corregidor's own mountains would shield the dumping operation from the bulk of the Japanese forces positioned north of the island. Army officers selected the spot for the salty depository by drawing lines that connected landmarks on the opposite shores of Manila Bay; the X of their intersection would mark the spot, a deep and choppy area that would discourage salvage efforts if this scheme ever came to light.

Starting at dusk on April 26, the *Harrison*, an old Army minelayer that was one of the few vessels left to the American command, began dumping pesos, 2,000 coins to a bag, three bags to a 300-pound box, two men to manhandle a box into the drink. The 42-man crew worked through the night in as much silence as they could maintain, their exertions illuminated by the flashes of guns and explosions of shells as the Japanese dismantled Corregidor's defenses. After six nights, the men dropped the last of the 2,630 boxes overboard. Three days later, the island surrendered.

Hopes that the dumping operation would remain secret quickly proved fruitless, and Captain Takiuti, the young engineer, was assigned the task of recovering the loot. A request to the Imperial Navy for divers was rebuffed; not only did the Navy, with its emphasis on professionalism, generally disdain the more political, more ideological Army, but it already had a job for its divers: rescuing the 500-foot-long Dewey Dry Dock that had been scuttled in Subic Bay.

Undeterred, Takiuti had Yosobe hire local divers, veterans of salvage work in Manila harbor, but none of whom, alas, had experience working at depths greater than 30 feet. Utilizing some full diving suits they had located, the Filipino divers made their first forays into the depths of Caballo Bay on May 27; on the second dive, a box was located and brought up to the casco. Using his sword, Takiuti pried open the box and slashed the bags. When the pesos spilled out, he and Yosobe exuberantly shouted, "Banzai!" By nightfall, two more crates had been brought up.

The next day, two more cases were recovered, although by the time the second one made it to the deck of the casco the headaches that some of the divers had begun experiencing the previous evening had begun to afflict all of them, only with greater intensity and accompanied by nausea and intense fatigue.

What the divers were experiencing was the bends, or decompression sickness, which arises as divers come out of deep water when dissolved gases inside the body turn into bubbles as the body undergoes depressurization. Since bubbles can form in and move throughout any part of the body, decompression sickness can produce a variety of symptoms of varying severity and can change from day to day. At its

worst, however, the pain is agonizing and the condition lethal, and generally speaking, the deeper one has dived and the faster one has emerged, the more severe the condition. The divers had no firsthand experience of the bends, but they had heard of divers becoming sick this way and they were alarmed.

On the third day, the symptoms in one of the divers intensified, and he collapsed. His colleagues treated him with hours of massage, and after a while he recovered. This emboldened the Japanese, who were now able to dismiss the divers' complaints as minor afflictions that could be ameliorated with a little massage. But to calm concerns, the Japanese gave the team a day off.

The next day, two divers collapsed in intense pain. Massage therapy proved unavailing, and the stricken divers were transported to a hospital in Manila, where they died. When this news was reported back to the casco, most of the rest of the divers immediately quit.

All but one. His conclusion was that the men were not getting an adequate supply of air. He proposed dispensing with the diving suit and using only the shallow water diving helmet. This contraption, which consists of a helmet attached to a weighted breastplate that helps sink the diver, focused the air in the helmet.

At first, this adaptation produced results. More boxes were recovered, and the diver felt no symptoms of the bends. Unfortunately, the diver's inexperience soon caught up with him in another way. Because the helmet and breastplate are not actually attached to the body, American divers who had used the equipment had run the air hose and a lifeline from the surface under their armpit, a technique that prevented the helmet from floating off or being pulled away. The poor Filipino did not think of this, and the next day while on the floor of the sea the helmet became separated from the man. He was never seen again.

By then, Takiuti had 18 boxes, about 100,000 pesos, and no divers. With a heightened appetite and no alternatives, he turned to the U.S. Navy

Six divers, Sauers, Morris "Moe" Solomon, Wallace A. "Punchy" Barton., P.L. "Slim" Mann, George McCullough, and Charles Giglio, were pulled out of the prison population at Cabanatuan and sent to Manila. Even before they left, they suspected that the Japanese might be calling on them to recover the sunken silver and sought the advice of their commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. Frank Davis

"You know what they're really after," he said. "Don't let them get it." Their suspicions were whetted further when on the train trip to Manila they were given pork sandwiches and

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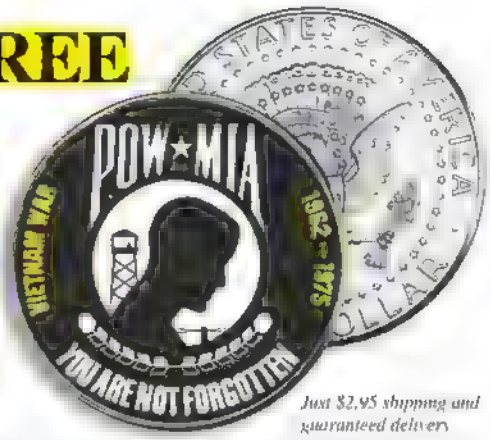

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cigarettes and then housed in a clean room where each had a cot and locker. This was a lot better than Cabanatuan. In some ways, it was even better than Corregidor!

By the end of the first day, three dives had been made, and two boxes holding about 12,000 pesos had been recovered. More importantly, the divers had acquired enormous amounts of information about the details of the operation. Yes, the casco was anchored near a mountain of boxes, but nothing that a competent diving crew would not have cleaned up in a few weeks. And not only did the Japanese not know how concentrated the pile was, they had no idea about the condition of the boxes

While the diving equipment was indeed ancient and decrepit, air pressure was so weak inside the helmet that water seeped in past the divers' chins, meaning that the men could never bend their necks without putting their faces underwater, this and their captors' general ignorance about the principles of diving and decompression worked to their advantage. The Americans were the experts. The Japanese were the ones who had seen three divers die. If the Japanese wanted the silver, they were going to have to do things the way the Americans said they had to be done. Which meant slowly

From the beginning, the divers decided to give the Japanese just enough to keep them happy. The silver was spread around a fairly large area, but within that area much of it was concentrated into a pile. The Japanese did not know that, and the Yanks did not tell. Instead, they stacked the deck, working out an arrangement in advance that some dives would end productively and some would be shut out.

The Americans also limited the amount of time they would spend on the sea floor to 15 minutes, established decompression breaks on their way up, and cancelled dives when the water currents or weather conditions turned unfavorable. This meant that each diver was performing about one dive a day, apart from Gigho, who was so inexperienced that his comrades refused to let him dive at all and instead left him in charge of maintaining their quarters. He proved very adept at this. Takiuti allowed the Americans to scrounge the American positions in Corregidor, and over time they found typewriters, a radio, pistols, grenades, and many creature comforts, including carpeting that had been in MacArthur's office.

The Americans slowed the pace in another way—sabotage. Boxes that were intact could be moved rather efficiently; the diver just tied a line to the box, and the men on the casco would haul it up. A broken box, holding damaged bags, could hardly be moved at all. The

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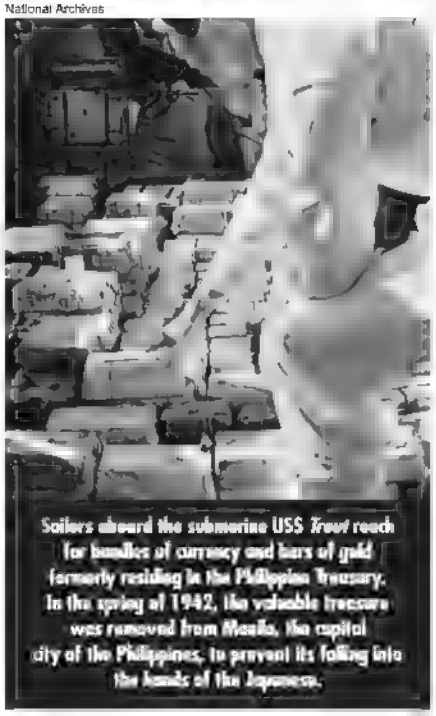

Sailors aboard the submarine USS *Trout* reach for bundles of currency and bars of gold formerly residing in the Philippine Treasury. In the spring of 1942, the valuable treasure was removed from Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, to prevent its falling into the hands of the Japanese.

pesos had to be transferred to another container. A diver's allotted 15 minutes might tick off before he harvested many coins. The other problem with loose coins, of course, is that some of them might not find themselves into a Japanese-approved receptacle at all. Some might find themselves in the sole of a diver's shoe or slipped inside his diving underwear.

As time went on, the Americans grew more brazen. Punchy Barton dropped a line that had a marlinspike at the end off the side of the boat; the tool dangled in the work area and made it easy to crack open the boxes. On the dives that had been preordained to be empty-handed, the diver spent his time cracking open boxes with the spike. Soon Moe Solomon figured out how to make bags from the legs of worn out dungarees. These, too, were then attached to a line and dropped off the casco. Over several shifts, each succeeding diver would help fill it. When at last the bag was full, the diver tugged on the dangling line 10 times—not a signal likely to be missed or misidentified—and while one man brought the bag up the others on deck formed a screen that hid him from the guards. There were perhaps a thousand pesos in each haul.

Then there came a day when the kempei tai was confronted with the theft. Punchy Barton had just come out of the water and was removing his helmet when his belt became loose and about a dozen pesos fell to the deck. Neither Takiuti nor Yosobe were close enough to see what had happened, but Barton was standing right in front of the kempe tai. Staring Barton in the eye, he rose from his chair and approached the diver, a nasty scowl predicting his intentions.

By the standards of the Cabanatuan prison camp, a beating was surely in order, and worse could not be ruled out. But once the kempei tai got face to face with Barton, he emitted a low, nasty laugh, bent over, and picked up eight of the coins. Then, with a grunt, he turned back to his seat, leaving the other Japanese soldiers to scramble to pick up the rest of the pesos.

After a month, Yosobe decided that he needed to pick up the pace and added three more Navy divers, George Chopchick, Holger Anderson, and Bob Sheats, whose memoir *One Man's War: Diving as a Guest of the Emperor 1942* is a source for much of the information about these events. As more pesos were recovered, the Americans were given more latitude. Relations eased between the Americans and some of the Japanese, notably Takiuti's second in command, who even arranged conjugal visits with local women for some of the prisoners.

On their scavenging expeditions, the divers often met other POW work crews, and they were able to slip pesos to them that were used to buy food and medicine for Americans festering in the camps. They also met a Filipino woman who turned out to be the widow of one of the divers who died trying to recover the pesos. She worked in Takiuti's office and was able to share the intelligence she gathered with the men. Most dramatically, she was able to warn the Yanks that a surprise inspection of their quarters had been scheduled. The men had just enough time to hide their contraband silver and weapons before their lodgings were tossed.

The beginning of the end of the American escapade came in September, when Yosobe, intent on increasing production, hired Moro divers to augment his crew. Although they professed that they hated the Japanese and loved America, and although they seemed to grasp why the Americans were moving at such a slow pace, the Moros went to work and began pulling up the pesos at a rapid rate.

One day soon after they started, the Moros, working on a separate casco with some excellent British diving equipment, pulled up 18 boxes, far, far more than the Americans had ever accomplished.

"They have better equipment!" protested the Americans when the Japanese asked why. It was an accurate explanation, but not a correct one, and the Yanks soon realized that they were in grave danger of losing their jobs to more effective workers.

On September 29, a storm brewed up. Anticipating a typhoon, Yosobe halted operations and packed up the men and equipment and sent

them to safety. En route to the harbor in Manila, the Americans noticed that they had all been placed on one boat, where they were being watched by two crewmen and an alcoholic soldier who had been nicknamed the Drunkard. For a moment they considered trying to overpower the guards and escaping, then rejected the idea of trying to get away during a typhoon. But then they also noticed that in the haphazard scheme of things, their boat was towing the Moro casco.

Once the Drunkard slipped into his customary stupor, the Americans loosened the bridle. Soon the Moro casco flipped over, dumping the competition's superior equipment into the bay. A little further loosening of the towline allowed the casco to separate and slip away. When the Drunkard roused himself, he was overcome by shame and remorse and tried to kill himself by jumping into the harbor. He was stopped by the Americans, who were acting under the assumption, probably correctly, that they would have been accused of murdering him.

For whatever reason, on November 7, the Japanese stopped the recovery efforts. Final tallies showed that about an eighth of the 16 million pesos had been recovered, 18 boxes by the Filipinos, 97 boxes by the Americans, 257 by the Moros.

The prisoners were assigned to other salvage operations, although in keeping with their moral calculus that prevented them from raising ships that could be used against the Allied war effort they acted only as pumpers, not as divers. After the laissez-faire Takiuti was suddenly replaced by a far less tolerant officer, the Americans' liberty was curtailed, and in February 1943, after refusing to return the salute of a visiting Japanese general, they were all returned to POW camps. Apart from Chopchick, who was killed when American planes bombed a Japanese ship on which he was being transported, they all survived the war.

Over the years, much of the fortune has been recovered. A U.S. Navy operation collected about six million pesos in 1945, and an American salvage crew working for the Republic of the Philippines found 2,800,000 more in 1947. But in an article published in 2007, numismatics expert Timothy B. Benford speculated that as much as 3.5 million pesos could still be scattered on the floor of Caballo Bay.

Author Jamie Malanowski has been an editor at Time, Esquire, *and* Playboy. *He is the author of* And the War Came: Six Months That Tore America Apart, *and is working on a biography of Lieutenant William Cushing, a Civil War naval hero.*

By Durk Steed

National Archives

Tip of the Spear

Don Crain and the 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion hit Red Beach 2 at Tarawa.

Don Crain

ABOVE: Private Don Crain. TOP: This well-known photo of the wrecked beach at Tarawa shows Don Crain's disabled amtrac in the distance (white circle). Although the amtrac sustained heavy losses, they were instrumental in the successful landings on the Island of Betio on November 20, 1943.

HE WORE THE CLOTHES OF ONE OF TARAWA'S MOST WELL-KNOWN and decorated heroes, but his name will not be found in any history book. Hurtled against hell, this unsung American drove a first-wave amtrac into the eye of the Tarawa hurricane, landing on the deadliest beach of the Marines' bloodiest across-the-reef landing of World War II. He is Don Crain, and this is his story.

Don Crain turned 17 in October 1941 and went straight to the Marine Corps recruiting station to celebrate. "My three brothers, all taller and stronger than me, couldn't pass the Marine physical for one reason or another. I passed, but before the war the Marines had a quota system. They only allowed 10 or 12 guys a month to sign up from Montana. I got turned down in October, November, and again in December."

After Pearl Harbor the quota system was dropped, and Don's birthday wish was finally granted. In January 1942, along with 22,686 other young men across the country, Don enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. Six weeks of boot camp in San Diego followed, and Don became a United States Marine. He expected to be thrown into the fight against the Japanese, but in his wildest dreams he could not foresee his role in that fight and the terrific human cost required.

Assigned to B Battery, Special Weapons Platoon, 2nd Marine Division, Don shipped out to New Zealand in October 1942. The 22-day voyage aboard the transport *President Monroe* was filled with monotony punctuated by one heart-racing day. "At some point south of the equator we saw ships on the horizon," Don remembered. "We thought it was the Japanese Navy! Then, the loudspeaker blared out that we were looking at U.S. Navy ships that had just picked up Eddie Rickenbacker."

Rickenbacker, the leading American fighter ace of World War I, had been adrift for 24 days after a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber he was a passenger in was forced to ditch. When the *Monroe* arrived in New Zealand, "We took one look, saw all the girls, and loved the place," recalled Don.

In July 1943, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the 2nd Marine Division to seize Tarawa atoll. The 2nd Division's Operations Officer, Lt. Col. David Shoup, faced two formidable challenges: concentrated, fortified Japanese defenses along the beach and a wide, shallow fringing reef that could not guarantee the three feet of water required by the Marines' ship-to-shore mainstay, the LCVP (landing craft, vehicle, personnel), or Higgins boat.

Shoup had a bold idea. Could the Marines' first-generation amphibious tractor—primitive, thin-skinned, underpowered, and previously used only to haul supplies behind the lines—be laden with Marines and used to spearhead an amphibious assault? Shoup's daring question was to transform Don Crain's life and the Pacific War.

While the Marines drank deeply of Kiwi hospitality, Dave Shoup busily planned for Tarawa. Committed to an LVT (landing vehicle, tracked) assault, he needed Marines to crew the amphibious craft in its daring new role. In August 1943, Don Crain was transferred into C Company, 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion. Don had never seen an amphibious tractor, but sparks flew on his first date with the 23-foot-long, $35,000 craft.

"I found the vehicle fascinating," he recalled. Don embarked on a crash course, training as an LVT-1 driver. In less than three months, he would find himself in the driver's seat of a first-wave amtrac clawing his way across a coral reef into the muzzles of Japanese guns at Tarawa.

On a dock in Wellington, New Zealand, in late October, Don's LVT-1, along with nine other amtracs scheduled for the first wave, was hoisted onto the weatherdeck of the assault transport *Virgo*. The tractor was field upgraded for the coming assault with three

Is your memory slipping away?

Israeli Submarine Captain Develops Military Strength Memory Pill

Helps restore recall, focus, concentration and clears up to 4-years of memory fog.

By Steven Wuzuba, Health Correspondent

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Ex submarine commander, David Rutenberg unveils his discovery at news conference

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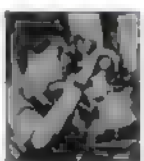

Rutenberg before he made the discovery of a lifetime... *LIPOGEN PS*

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Don Crain

Don Crain's amtrac, churning toward the embattled beach at Betio, was among the group circled in the foreground of this photo. The Japanese took up firing positions on a long pier extending into the lagoon (1) and in the hulk of a half submerged freighter in the shallows near the beach (2). From either of these positions, the defenders raked the approaching Marines with automatic weapons fire.

machine guns, ¼-inch steel to protect the cab, and a white "41" painted on the stern and cab sides. Next stop were two days of invasion rehearsal in Efate, New Hebrides, where one of the LVT-1s broke down. Don helped tow it back to the *Virgo*.

The *Virgo* departed Efate on November 13, and the next day the assault Marines learned that their target was Tarawa. "A few guys had never heard of New Zealand before we got there. None of us had ever heard of Tarawa. On D-minus-2 the lieutenants and captains gave us a preinvasion talk. They said that after all the bombing and shelling there wouldn't be a Jap left alive. If there were, they'd all be crying for their moms. They told us it would be a piece of cake."

Don's orders were to transport 20 Marines of the 2nd Regiment in the first wave and land them on Red Beach 2. It sounded simple enough, but intelligence gathered on Tarawa's defenses revealed that Red Beach 2 was bristling with coconut log-reinforced strongpoints, concrete pillboxes, sandbagged positions atop a stone seawall, concealed rifle pits, a double apron of concrete tetrahedrons, and barbed wire strung across the reef. Elite Japanese Imperial Marines of the 7th Special Naval Landing Forces manned the defenses. Their orders were to annihilate the Americans on the beach.

Shrouded in the darkness of the early morning of November 20, 1943, *Virgo* arrived off Tarawa. "I still remember praying, trying to sleep, and having a meal of steak and eggs," said Don.

LVT 41 was hoisted over the side, and Don guided her to the open water rendezvous point. There, assault Marines cross-decked from Higgins boats into amtracs. Plans called for 18 assault Marines in each LVT-1. In LVT 41, 20 Marines packed in as tight as sardines. The riflemen, fully combat loaded, stood shoulder to shoulder in the small cargo hold. The LVT's low freeboard and the ocean swells combined to soak the Leathernecks.

At 6:48 AM, the troop-laden LVTs formed into three long, single-file lines, and 42 LVT-1s of the first wave bobbed on the starboard while two lines of 24 and 21 LVT-2s composing the second and third waves scudded along the port side. Crain did not know it at the time, but LVT 41's position to the right of center in the first wave line was to throw him into the teeth of the most dangerous section of Tarawa's most deadly beach.

Shepherded by the minesweeper *Pursuit*'s searchlight, Don fought a headwind and current to navigate through the lagoon passage. The distance from *Virgo* to the line of departure was almost nine miles, the longest ship-to-shore transit of any invasion in the Pacific War. Hunkered for hours at the controls of LVT 41, Don had no idea that he was approaching the fiercest maelstrom of concentrated fire that the Japanese had yet to throw at the Marines in the Pacific.

Beginning just before dawn, Navy battleships unleashed an apocalypse. Sunrise lifted the curtain on a theater of destruction. For almost three hours, 16-inch shells, sounding like freight trains flying through the air, rained down on the little island, exploding in eruptions of sand and flame. Carrier aircraft strafed and bombed when the battleships took a rest. Don first caught sight of the islet of Betio, one of Tarawa's many small spits of land, through the narrow slit of the cab's appliqué armor plating. The Navy's promise to blast Tarawa into the sea seemed to be coming true before his eyes, bolstering his spirits. Burning and smoking, Betio looked like a funeral pyre.

Churning shoreward in his LVT, it seemed impossible that any Japanese could still be alive. Yet, Don's trusty Springfield M1903 rifle was stored on the deck behind him. Lieutenant Bonnie Little stood directly behind, manning one of the cab's .50-caliber machine guns. In a letter to his wife, Little had written, "The Marines have a way of making you afraid—not of dying—but of not doing your job."

Don stared as the tropical breeze blew the pall of smoke away. Momentarily, a slight chill ran down his spine. The island floated above the lagoon, defiant and menacing. Ashore, out of Don's sight, Japanese Marines, hidden safely in their bunkers and pillboxes, stared down their gunsights waiting for the Americans to come into range.

At 8:24 AM and 6,000 yards from shore, the column of first-wave LVT-1s, white frothing wake spewing behind, executed a right turn and crossed the line of departure. Behind him in the cargo hold, Don heard the command, "Lock and load!" Riflemen slammed eight-round clips into M-1 Garand rifles and pushed safeties forward. Lieutenant Little pulled back on his machine gun's cocking lever to catch the belt, pulled back again, and released a second time to advance the first round into the chamber. The assault Marines aboard LVT 41 shared a common duty to get ashore quickly, move forward, defeat any surviving enemy, and secure the island. Don bore another duty: to drive his human cargo to shore.

Squeezing every bit of power out of the 150-horsepower Hercules engine, Don coaxed 3.5 knots from LVT 41. He steered to the west of the long, central pier, aiming for Red Beach 2. The current pulled him farther right.

For several minutes, there was an uneasy calm. Both sides held their breath and their triggers. The Japanese waited for the LVTs to come into range. The Marines had no visible targets. The Navy ships and planes stopped firing to avoid friendly fire accidents.

As Don closed to within 3,000 yards of shore, Japanese air bursts peppered the amtrac. Illusions of an uncontested assault vanished. Don adjusted his helmet, glancing at his radio operator on his left and his assistant driver on the right. Contact with the reef, the reason for the LVTs' presence, was at hand.

In hindsight, the Americans placed false confidence in their preinvasion bombardment, but the Japanese placed too much confidence in

National Archives

Amtrac No. 41, the amphibious landing craft Don Crain piloted on November 20, 1943, is circled in this photo. The amtrac sits with others in a salvage area near Red Beach 2 following the capture of Betio. Crain spent an additional 19 days at Tarawa assisting with the recovery of the disabled vehicles.

Tarawa's reef. In stunned amazement, the Japanese watched as the gangly amphibians did not stall at the reef but waddled out of the lagoon, clawed onto the shallow sand and coral of the fringing reef, and churned forward. The Japanese had never seen such vehicles.

The Japanese regained their senses and swatted violently at the "spiders" with a wall of angry steel. In doing so, the shortcomings of the preinvasion bombardment became obvious. Plenty of Japanese were alive and plenty of their guns intact. Without air or naval fire to keep the Japanese buttoned up, Don felt like a duck in a shooting gallery. His amtrac clawed across the shelterless reef, its speed increasing slightly as its tracks gained traction on the coral and sand.

"The reef was about 800 yards out. The pier was to our left. I could see bullets coming through our bow and a lot coming through the side. We were taking a lot of fire from the hulk of a ship aground to our right. The fire killed both the radio operator and the assistant driver."

Pushing and pulling on the steering levers, Don piloted LVT 41 toward the cove separating Red Beaches 1 and 2. Directly ahead lay a particularly pernicious point of resistance dubbed "the Pocket" by Marines. The Pocket was to withstand three full days of Marine attacks and was the last position of organized Japanese resistance to fall on Tarawa. Unknowingly, Don was driving LVT 41 into the eye of the Tarawa hurricane.

"After Tarawa, the maintenance officers told us that they had tested the armor plating installed on the amtrac cabs in New Zealand. An M-1 Garand's bullet could go right through it. We were never told that before the invasion. It would have been too demoralizing."

Marines in the cargo hold of the LVT did not even have the scant protection of the cab's armored plates. Lieutenant Little, who had written to his wife that he was afraid of not

Continued on page 74

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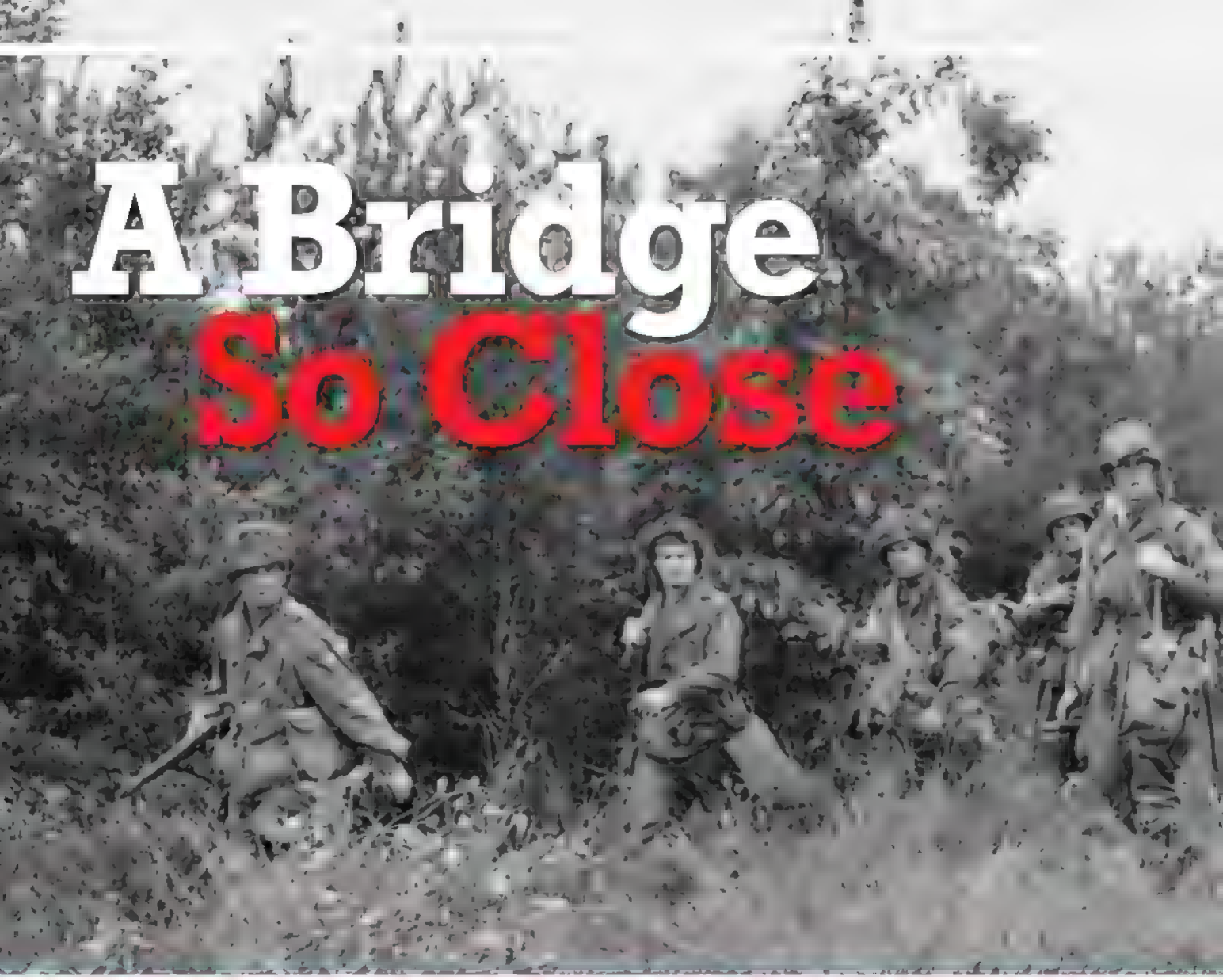
A Bridge So Close



ON the veranda of his temporary headquarters in a Dutch country house outside Veghel, Holland, renowned Luftwaffe General Kurt Student played lunch host to an old comrade, the chief of staff of the German Seventh Army. September 17, 1944, was a peaceful and pleasant late summer day in the Netherlands. Before dessert arrived, their talk turned to Germany's ongoing setbacks in the war, first in Russia and now in France. Student, personally appointed by Luftwaffe chief Hermann Goring five years earlier to build and command its Fallschirmjager airborne forces, told his guest the reversal was largely due to Germany's inability and Hitler's reluctance to mount airborne operations.

From across the table, General Rudolph von Gersdorff defended Student, his friend and superior. Nonsense, he said. Because of Student, Germany was the very first to pioneer air assault. He cited the invasion of Crete and especially the capture of Eban Emael, the Belgian fortress taken by only 400 Fallschirmjager during the invasion of the Low Countries in May 1940.

"We make small successful experiments and then we stop," Student retorted. "I am speaking of the real thing."

Just then, a faint but familiar mechanized roar came from the south, splitting the air around them. The men got quiet and looked skyward. They saw a dark spot on the far horizon that grew thicker and wider while the steady hum of airplane motors grew louder. Suddenly, the air force general jumped from his chair, ran to the lawn, and raised both his arms in a sweeping motion.

"This is what I was speaking about," he shouted to his friend. "The real thing!"

Happening in front of their eyes was phase one of Operation Market-Garden, the British-inspired plan to create a 60-mile wedge inside Nazi-held territory and reach the Dutch city of Arnhem. To do so, one British and two American airborne divisions were landed west to east across Holland with orders to destroy enemy forces and seize key roads and bridges needed by advancing infantry and armored units of British XXX Corps in its dash for Arnhem.

The operation was designed by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, commander of the Allied 21st Army Group, and approved by Allied leaders. Its ultimate objective was to cross the Lower Rhine at Arnhem and sweep into the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany, possibly end-

Airborne troops of Company G, 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, move out from the drop zone near the Dutch town of Zon on September 18, 1944, advancing toward the town of Best and a confrontation with German forces there. The battle at Best was a pivotal action during Operation Market-Garden.

PARATROOPERS OF THE U.S. 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION ENCOUNTERED SURPRISING RESISTANCE AT THE DUTCH TOWN OF BEST DURING OPERATION MARKET-GARDEN

BY RICHARD A. BERANTY

ing the war by Christmas 1944. Its success was predicated on one critical element—timing. The British ground force had approximately 36 hours to relieve the paratroopers at the far end of the corridor, who in theory would be holding the Arnhem bridge.

The Americans dropping from the sky near General Student's that day were men of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), 101st Airborne Division. They had been given one of the least spectacular assignments in Montgomery's plan, mainly to secure several small towns, cover passage of the Wilhelmina Canal waterway, and act as a buffer between the 501st PIR to its north and 506th to its south. The regiment's landing in the flat fields of Drop Zone B near Zon went off perfectly. In just over an hour, better than 90 percent, or nearly 1,500 men, had gathered in their assembly areas.

One of the towns assigned to the 502nd was Best, Holland, a nondescript place of about 300 houses, a church, and one gas station situated on the main road outside of town. That roadway led south to the city of Eindhoven, a major objective of the 506th. Today, the A-2 Highway, whose odyssey begins in northern Europe and ends in southern Spain, hugs the eastern side of Best with its 25,000 inhabitants. The Zonsche Forest, a pine plantation sown by the Dutch years before the war, runs along the A-2's other side. About the size of a small American city, Best's checkerboard tree plots and distinctive firebreaks spaced every 30 yards were ideal landmarks for pilots of C-47 transport aircraft and the 101st Airborne men dropping from the sky.

Best was important to the Allied assault because of its proximity to the Wilhelmina Canal and the two bridges that crossed there—one pedestrian and one railroad—just in case either was needed by Montgomery's advancing ground forces. Secondary orders for the 502nd were to capture both spans, set up defenses around them, and block the main road running south to Eindhoven.

At first only one platoon was assigned to the mission. Division intelligence determined the area was manned by a few squads of German troops—kids and old men. Afterward, this estimate was sheepishly described as "a minor error." After some persistence by 3rd Battalion command, the platoon was increased to company strength, augmented by 40 combat engineers and a light machine-gun section. Fourteen minutes after assembling, H Company was headed southwest on its four-mile march toward Best under the command of Captain Robert E. Jones. It

All photos: National Archives

ABOVE: American airborne troops, their parachutes billowing in the sunlight, plummet toward the ground below during the opening phase of Operation Market-Garden. OPPOSITE: Elements of the U.S. 101st Airborne Division converged on the Dutch town of Best and fought a pitched battle with the Germans there during Operation Market-Garden. The strength of the German forces in the area came as a rude shock to the lightly armed paratroopers, who gave a good account of themselves in combat.

was about 1:45 PM.

While G2 estimates of enemy strength at Best were grossly inaccurate, its assessment was quite understandable. There was no way of knowing that over the past two days hundreds of German troops had detrained in the area, including parts of the Fifteenth Army in retreat from the Scheldt Estuary to the west, tired units from as far away as Normandy, men from the 59th and 245th Divisions, and two SS police battalions. The exact number is unknown, but at the very least 1,000 troops, probably many more, had arrived at Best by rail the day before, and many more would follow with plenty of artillery. To make matters worse for the 250 Screaming Eagles advancing on their target, six German 88mm cannon spaced at 50-yard intervals also stood in their path.

The paratroopers began to receive small arms fire at about 3 PM from a roadblock the Germans had established at the Best intersection. It was not an ordinary roadblock, as one of the powerful 88s was positioned right alongside the pump at the town's gas station with smaller artillery in support. To orient himself on the march, Captain Jones used the church steeple at Best as his guide but lost sight of it going through the Zonsche Forest. He thought that if he kept on that approach it would lead him to the canal halfway between the railroad and highway bridges.

Instead, the men emerged from the forest 600 yards north of where he had intended, in the opposite direction of the bridges and only 200 yards away from the roadblock. "Meeting strong resistance," Jones radioed battalion headquarters at 4 PM. The situation was about to get worse.

Within 10 minutes of his call, an enemy column of 12 trucks hauling a number of 20mm cannon was spotted barreling south down the arrow-straight roadway toward Best. Word was quickly passed among the paratroopers to hold all fire, suck the convoy in, and then destroy it. But not everyone got wind of the plan in that short time. A German motorcyclist who was riding well in the lead was shot dead from the seat of his bike. It brought the column to a stop, and its men and guns deployed quickly, adding 200 more Germans to the fight. The plan to capture Best was now out of the question for Jones. Facing attacks from three sides and with sniper fire demonizing his rear, he abandoned the area without pursuit. By 6 PM, his men were digging foxholes on a line in the fading light somewhere inside the Zonsche Forest.

Despite this setback, the battle plan as originally conceived by headquarters was apparently still on. Before the company withdrew from Best and with no understanding of the situation, battalion command insisted that Jones send 2nd Platoon, reinforced by 26 engineers and part of the machine-gun unit, to capture both canal bridges and set up defenses around them. It was a next to impossible task for such a small group to accomplish with the hundreds of Germans in the area. Making their mission more difficult, the enemy had infiltrated the southern edge of the Zonsche Forest during the afternoon and placed machine guns at every third or fourth fire lane the men had to cross, giving enemy gunners a 400-yard unobstructed view down the breaks

Lieutenant Edward L. Wierzbowski commanded 2nd Platoon. Night was coming, and so was the rain. Wierzbowski's men were as apprehensive about the approaching darkness as they were about the assignment. From the moment they met machine-gun fire at the first fire lane, Wierzbowski knew what was in store and gave the necessary orders. Slowly, methodically, and one by one, his men bounded across each firebreak as stealthily as possible, unaware whether it was covered by a machine gun. At some breaks, the bullets traced their way in front or behind them; at other breaks there was no fire at all. It was a slow trek but, incredibly, no one was hit. The rain increased to a cold drizzle when 2nd Platoon emerged from the pine plantation at about 8 PM.

Hidden by darkness, an hour later the men reached the dike, some 500 yards east of the highway bridge. Two large derricks that the Dutch used to unload goods from the canal had to be crossed. On the water side of the complex ran a steel catwalk hanging out over the canal. Thanks to a dark and rainy night, the paratroopers climbed, crossed over, and descended the mud-covered and slippery metal framework undetected. Those making their way across would have been so many sitting ducks had a flare gone up.

The Germans did not notice, and once again the men were along the dike, 30 yards away from the bridge, when a German soldier from across the canal innocently unloaded his rifle into the air, sending bullets well over their heads. It brought every man to a silent stop. Wierzbowski was sure they had not been discovered. He slithered his way through the wet grass to his lead scout, Private Joe E. Mann, and whispered in his ear, "I think we're all right. Come along."

The two had not crawled far when they saw Germans changing guard at the nearby entrance to the bridge. As one soldier came off, another soldier came on. What they did not see was the route of the sentry's post, which took him in a wide circle around the men. They were belly down in the center of his rounds. For an intense 30 minutes Wierzbowski and Mann waited silent and motionless, unsure of what to do while the sentry made several circles

around them. They could not backtrack, being so close that any movement would give them away. They could not rush the guard either. He was talking to his buddy across the canal, who was also on duty

The platoon waited, too. Not hearing from Wierzbowski for so long, several of his men started to climb the dike, and others followed. When the fourth man reached the top, five German machine guns from across the canal opened fire. The fury of the barrage made some of the Americans flee into the woods and out of sight. But it was the break that Wierzbowski and Mann needed. They jumped up when the firing started and ran back toward their men. Wierzbowski led those who had not run away to a position 60 yards from the canal, where they dug in for the night. He then counted his assets: one machine gun with 500 rounds, one mortar with six rounds, one bazooka with five rounds, and 18 men. Awake and on the move for 24 hours, they were glad when enemy mortars quit firing on their position at about 3 AM.

For German commanders on the other side of the bridge, there was no time to lose. They worked quickly, piecing together the hodgepodge of groups massing at the Best rail line to meet the Americans. It seemed to be working well initially. German mortar squads and artillery units were making a difference. H Company, holed up in the Zonsche Forest, lost 30 men from enemy fire before daylight arrived. Lt. Col. Robert G. Cole, 3rd Battalion commander, moved his remaining two companies south to the canal, but after nightfall they also were digging foxholes inside the forest because of strong enemy firepower.

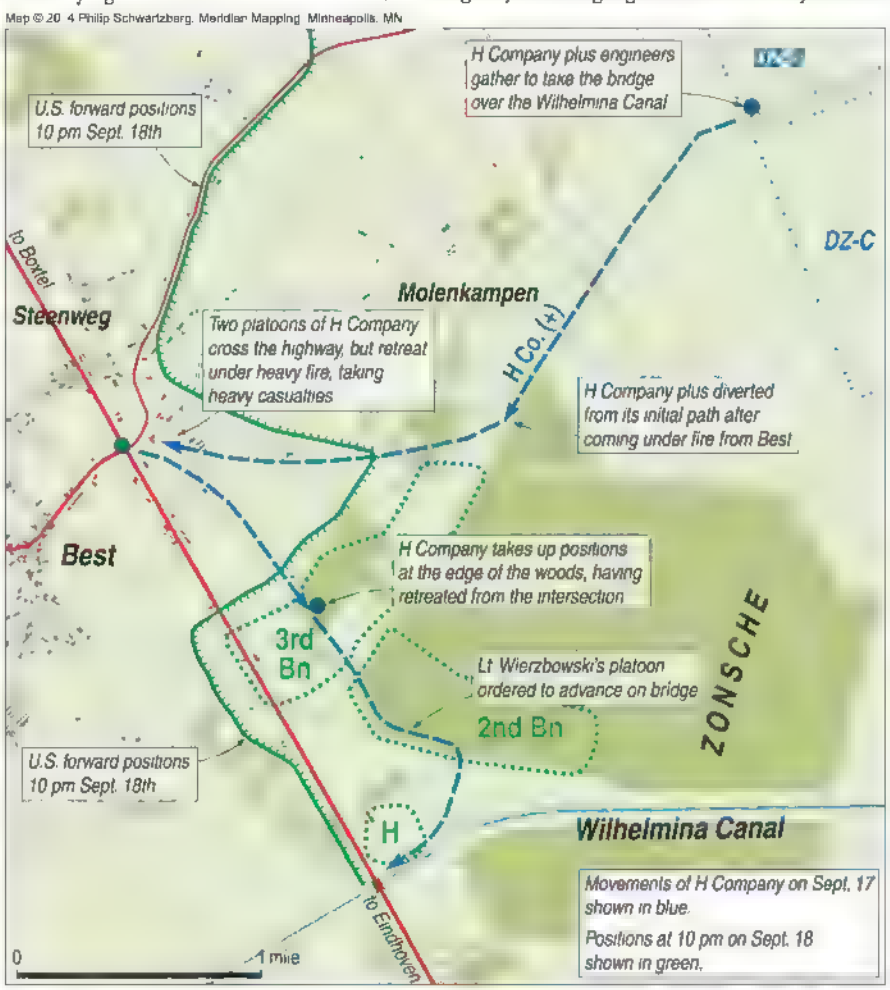
Jones and Cole were unaware, but their positions in the Zonsche Forest that night were only 1,000 yards apart. Neither did they know the whereabouts of Wierzbowski and 2nd Platoon, which was becoming worrisome. Two patrols went in search but returned because of enemy fire.

"Get a platoon down there to find Wierzbowski," Cole radioed Jones at 11:30 PM. Jones did so, reluctantly sending 3rd Platoon. It made three different attempts and was driven back each time. It would be another day before anyone learned the fate of 2nd Platoon.

"They've been annihilated beyond a doubt," Cole told his executive officer, Wyoming native Major John P. Stopka.

Cole's men were being pushed deeper into the woods by enemy fire when at 4 AM on September 18 Colonel John H. Michaelis, commander of the 502nd, finally took notice. He ordered the three companies of 2nd Battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. Steve A. Chappuis, to free up 3rd Battalion, which was stuck in the forest, march on Best, and secure the bridges once and for all. Michaelis had been holding Chappuis's men in reserve in case they were needed to support the 506th driving toward Eindhoven, where division intelligence said the bulk of the enemy forces were located. Second Battalion moved out at 8 AM on Cole's right straight toward the highway.

"It was just like the book," explained Lt. Col. Allen Ginder of regimental headquarters, who watched the assault unfold. "The Dutch had been haying and the fields ahead were covered



by these small piles of uncollected hay. That was the only cover. From left to right the line rippled forward in perfect order and with perfect discipline, each group of two or three men dashing to the next hay pile as it came their time. You would have thought the piles were of concrete. But the machine gun fire cut into them, sometimes setting the hay on fire, sometimes wounding or killing the men behind them. That did not stop any except the dead and wounded.

"One man went down from a bullet. I heard someone yell, 'Sergeant Brodie, you're next.' Another man behind the hay pile yelled, 'Brodie's dead, but I'm coming on' and he jumped up and ran ahead. It was like a problem being worked out on a parade ground. The squad leaders were leading; the platoon leaders urged them on. Those who kept going usually managed to survive. The few who tried to hold back were killed."

Chappuis also watched as his battalion took a beating from artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire coming from beyond the highway. More than 20 percent of his command was gone, including eight officers who lay dead in the field. To continue the advance as ordered meant the destruction of his battalion. He stopped the attack and pulled his men back to reorganize.

"Some of the guys near me were bunched up," said Sergeant Lud Labutka of E Company. "I even yelled at them to scatter. You're never supposed to get close to the next guy. That's what they taught us—don't bunch up because that's what the enemy is looking for. Then a mortar shell hit three of them. It landed in one guy's lap, tearing off his legs. Another one was

dying. He asked me to recite the Act of Contrition to him. He died right there in my arms."

Michaelis had no reserve forces available to send in or to request from division headquarters. First Battalion's three companies were assisting the 501st to the north at St. Oedenrode, and the 506th had not yet captured Eindhoven. As Chappius's fall back began, German infantry saw an opening and started to infiltrate Cole's lines in the forest by twos and threes. Cole rang up Michaelis from inside his two-man command post asking if close air support was available and then left his foxhole for a short while.

When Cole returned, he found radioman Sergeant Robert E. Doran dead. A shell had hit the Connecticut native and blown his skull apart. Cole was wiping blood and brains off the radio's headset when Stopka arrived with news that a unit of Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bombers was coming over, having escorted gliders into the area just minutes before. Their appearance on that day was the only stroke of luck the 502nd would have during the entire battle. It was 1:30 PM.

Faced with being overrun, few of Cole's men were willing to leave the safety of their foxholes. When the Thunderbolts swooped in low to strafe, their bullets clipped the edge of the forest where the men were dug in. Stopka quickly organized the placing of orange flags to mark their position. The planes came over for a second run and adjusted their aim, which slowed enemy fire considerably. Cole walked out of the tree line and into an open field. He stood and watched the air attack with one hand shielding his eyes. A German sniper inside a farmhouse 100 yards away put his sights on the exposed target. He fired his rifle and hit the 29-year-old in the temple, killing him instantly. Third Battalion now belonged to Stopka.

Cole's death was a profound loss to his men. The Texas-born West Point graduate was an imposing and seemingly fearless commander highly respected both as a leader of men and dedicated soldier. When he died, paperwork was already in place to recommend him for the Medal of Honor for leading a bayonet charge against enemy positions in Normandy three months earlier. The citation was approved posthumously. Cole's body is interred at the U.S. Cemetery in Margraten, Holland.

Cole's influence on his command was such that many found it difficult to believe he was actually gone, but they gained some solace moments later when the German sniper was gunned down fleeing the farmhouse. On the same day Cole was killed so too was his enemy counterpart, the German commander at Best.

Anticipating contact with German forces at any moment, paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division gather along a treeline in the Dutch countryside on September 18, 1944. German small arms fire and the deadly accurate 88mm cannon inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans assaulting Best. BELOW: Two heroes of Operation Market-Garden, Private Joe E. Mann (left) and Lt. Col. Robert Cole (right) received the Medal of Honor posthumously for their heroics. Mann was already wounded when he fell on a German hand grenade to shield fellow soldiers in his trench from the blast. Cole had been recommended for the Medal of Honor for his actions in Normandy, but a German sniper killed him in Holland.

Wierzbowski, positioned east of the highway bridge that morning, had no way of knowing the rest of 3rd Battalion was bogged down in the nightmare of the Zonsche Forest from which he had escaped the night before. His men heard distant fire throughout the night and began to think support might be coming their way. Even more encouraging, the overnight rain had quit and daylight provided their first clear view of the bridge—a tantalizing 60 yards away and a short run for a conditioned paratrooper.

The Germans had even pulled off their sentry at the near entrance, but any movement from the men's foxholes drew an instant response from the enemy. They could not stand up to stretch, scratch, or urinate. "Every time we raised up to start toward the bridge we drew heavy fire from two sides," said Private James C. Hoyle, one of Wierzbowski's scouts.

Fire was coming from German troops—most of whom had been scattered south from Best during 2nd Battalion's drive across the hay field—massing for an attack from across the highway. Wierzbowski saw what was coming and ordered all weapons to fire on his order at 50 yards. The lone machine gun proved most effective, leaving 35 Germans on the ground. The Americans continued to watch.

At around 10 AM, a German soldier and a Dutch civilian walked up to the far entrance to the bridge. They talked for some 15 minutes and left. Wierzbowski thought nothing of it at the time, least of all that the two were setting a timed fuse to detonate an explosive charge already in place. Precisely at 11 AM, a powerful explosion lifted the 100-foot structure, and it crumbled into the water. Dirt, dust, and debris dropped on the men in their foxholes. While the bridge at Arnhem was a bridge too far, the bridge at Best was a bridge ever so close. It was now a pile of broken concrete and twisted steel lying across the Wilhelmina Canal. All the men could do was wait for battalion command to arrive—but not before making some noise of their own.

Joe Mann and Jim Hoyle, Wierzbowski's main scouts who led the mission throughout, grabbed some weapons and crawled toward the canal to do just that. They spotted a German artillery dump to their west, which Mann lit up with two rounds from the bazooka. Over the next hour the pair killed six Germans advancing on their hideout until enemy fire finally penetrated their lair. Two bullets tore into Mann, hitting both of his shoulders. He handed the bazooka over to Hoyle, who aimed at a German 88 positioned 150 yards down the canal, hitting it with one round.

Wierzbowski was only happy to keep pressuring the enemy. A truck hurrying ammunition away from the destroyed 88 exploded into a fireball when it was hit by American machine-gun fire from across the canal. He also sent three men toward the derrick, who returned in short time with four enemy prisoners, three of whom were German medics. A few minutes later the P-47s made their dramatic appearance and strafed the area, nipping the edges of both their lines.

Tired of such harassment, the Germans regrouped and at mid-afternoon launched their second attack straight down the bank of the canal. The frantic fight that followed was costly for the paratroopers. Mann was wounded two more times in his arms. Another man was hit at the base of his spine and died from loss of blood. One died when a shell fragment struck his head. Two men volunteered to break out and get aid;

minutes later one returned wounded and reported the other had been captured.

The German attack was driven off, but it left the detachment low on ammunition, high on casualties, and completely out of medical supplies. In spirit they still had a pulse, which was raised a bit late in the afternoon when two armored vehicles of XXX Corps appeared on the contested far side of the canal.

"Stay where you are. I am sure that help will be here soon," advised the British commander.

At 5 PM, Chappuis launched his reorganized attack by 2nd Battalion from a different approach, this time to the southeast along the highway and not toward it like before. He was having better success, and by evening some pressure was lifted from Stopka inside the Zonsche Forest. German lines were beginning to show cracks, and their communications were eroding. Some of Chappuis's men actually reached Wierzbowski's outpost about midnight but did not stay for very long.

Wierzbowski told them the bridge was blown, and they took that information back to battalion. They failed to report, however, that Wierzbowski's group, nursing its many wounds, was still holding on. In fact, word was spreading among the men that 2nd Platoon, now being called the lost platoon, had been wiped out.

A dense fog hid the destroyed bridge from Wierzbowski at first light on September 19, the third and final day of the battle at Best. Since the bridge was destroyed, so too was any urgency by regiment to advance on the position and relieve his unit. But it was not as if Chappuis and Stopka were sitting idle. They were fighting an increasingly strange and ferocious battle with enemy forces along the highway at Best and in the Zonsche Forest that had continued from the previous night.

The stalemate continued with terrific fighting until late afternoon when a squadron of 12 British tanks from the 7th Armoured Regiment joined the attack and proved decisive.

"The rumbling of the tanks and the noise of their fire had taken all heart out of the enemy," Stopka wrote in his report.

Demoralized German soldiers dropped their weapons and began to surrender in groups of 70 men at a time, 700 in two hours and about 1,200 total. They were rising out of ditches and emerging from woods, overwhelming the Americans still in combat attacking toward the canal. Neither side paid much attention to the other during the surrender.

Stopka radioed regiment to send all available MPs to assist. In the meantime, his staff assembled an assortment of cooks, messengers, and others to handle the prisoners until they arrived.

The tank-led attack pressed forward, crossed an open field strewn with dead Germans, and stopped at the canal south of Best. When the firing ceased, a disturbing element of the battle began to emerge and was confirmed by many eyewitnesses. Chappuis stated that on 10 different occasions he saw German soldiers walking toward American lines with arms raised in the air only to be shot dead from behind by German machine-gun crews. Stopka also watched the killing take place, and before dark sent a detail of men to the open field to assess the number of enemy dead. They counted 600 German bodies.

Wierzbowski, waiting in a shroud of mist at the former bridge site, was on his own for the duration. His men were exhausted, hurt, and content to wait for the relief that never arrived. As the sun rose higher in the sky that morning and temperatures warmed, the fog that covered the area burned off in an instant. When it did, a German officer suddenly appeared 20 feet away, leading a column of soldiers straight toward them.

The ensuing close-quarter fight was fast and furious. Grenades were thrown by both sides. Two rolled into foxholes, and both were tossed back before exploding. The next one landed in front of the machine gun, exploding in the face of Private Robert Laino, blowing out an eye and blinding the other, making a bloody pulp of his face. His cries for aid went unanswered. Another enemy grenade bounced off Laino's knee. He dropped to the bottom of his foxhole, desperately trying to find it. Somehow he did, threw it back, and it exploded in mid air.

One of the last grenades thrown by the Germans rolled behind Mann, who was sitting inside a trench with six other wounded men. His arms were useless, wrapped tight to his torso by bandages to stop his four wounds from bleeding.

"I'm taking this one," Mann said and pressed his back onto the grenade. The explosion split his backbone in half. "My back's gone," he whispered to Wierzbowski and died without a further sound.

Down to one grenade, the moment of surrender had arrived. On Wierzbowski's order, Pfc. Anthony M. Waldt tied a handkerchief to the barrel of his rifle and waved it in the air. The fighting stopped, and 14 men crawled out of their foxholes and kept crawling toward their captors. Only three were unwounded.

A British Sherman tank crosses the Wilhelmina Canal in Holland as American paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division and Dutch civilians look on. Allied control of the Wilhelmina Canal was critical to the advance of ground forces toward British paratroopers at Arnhem.

Joe Eugene Mann was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery and sacrifice on the battlefield that day. The 22-year-old native of Washington state was described as a "one-man army" by his comrades, who said he was the bravest man they had ever known. Mann is a national hero in Holland, the epitome of the American soldier. Children learn of his heroism in primary school, and two monuments stand in his honor, one located just off the A-2 Highway near the spot where he died. Cole and Mann, the only two Medal of Honor recipients from the 101st Airborne during World War II, died

Continued on page 74

THE storming of Fortress Konigsberg in April 1945 was the finale of a two-month Soviet siege. The city, one of the few triumphs of Hitler's fortress strategy, had been encircled by late January and lay hundreds of kilometers behind the main front line by the time the Soviets launched their final assault toward the Nazi capital of Berlin. Careful planning, economical use of matériel, and a close coordination during the assault eventually ensured the Soviet victory.

January 1945 had been a tough month for the troops of the Soviet Third Belorussian Front. Commanded by the young Army General Ivan Chernyakhovsky, they had been slogging their way through layer after layer of German positions since the beginning of their East Prussian offensive operations on January 13. Marked by a dogged and bitter German defense, the offensive through Germany's most eastern province had been painfully slow. The *gauleiter* (political leader) and Reich Defense Commissar of the province, Erich Koch, had—in line with Hitler's orders—demanded that every East Prussian village be "defended like a fortress, which the enemy could only take through *durchfressen*, by letting his blood flow."

Red Army infantry and tanks forge ahead as Soviet aircraft attack German positions inside the fortress city of Königsberg in this dramatic painting by Russian war artist Philip Satckike. The Soviet capture of the fortress city was costly, but the attackers eventually overwhelmed the German garrison.

Casualty rates had indeed been shockingly high, but by late January, two weeks after the beginning of the offensive, the Soviet troops had managed to tear apart the two German armies that were defending East Prussia. The German Third Panzer Army and Fourth Army, which had been split into three pockets, stood with their backs to the Baltic Sea. One of these pockets—the one most feared by the Soviet Command and at the same time the most prestigious objective—was Fortress Königsberg. Lurking behind a fortress belt, the city, the capital of East Prussia, was considered the cradle of German militarism and fascism.

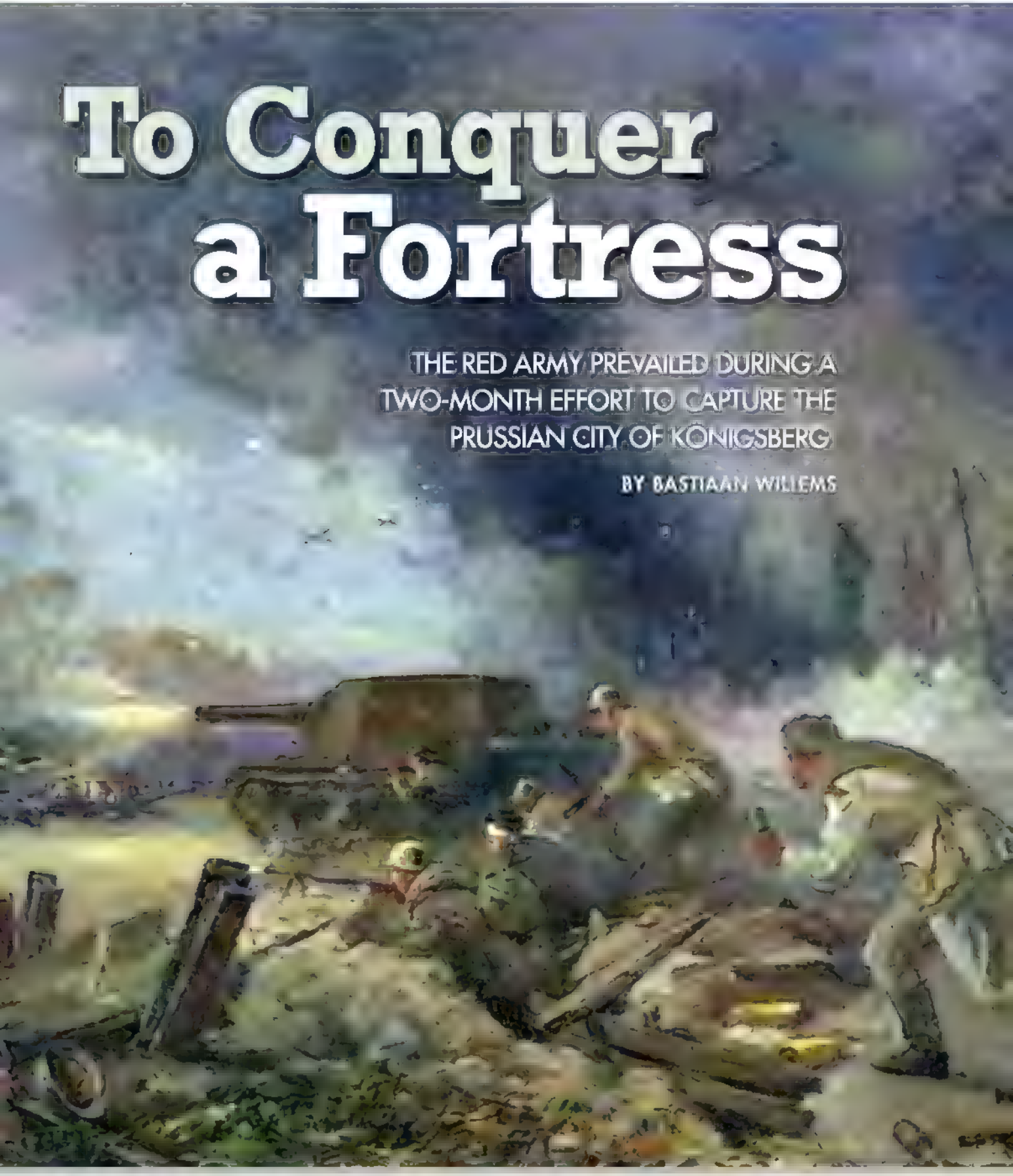
For centuries Königsberg had been one of the most important cities of Germany. Kings had been crowned there, and the philosopher Immanuel Kant had lived there his entire life. Conquering it would therefore not only be a strategic victory but also a significant setback for German morale. After its conquest, Königsberg would remain in Soviet hands. In November 1943, during the Tehran Conference, Soviet Premier Josef Stalin had insisted on making the city and the surrounding area part of the Soviet Union. For Chernyakhovsky's men, however, that prospect still seemed remote that January. Little did they know that it would take over two months to capture the city.

On January 26, 1945, the first bombs started to fall on the city. Unlike the earlier East Prussian cities the Soviet Armies had come across, Königsberg had been designated a fortress, a *Festung*. Captivated by the idea

To Conquer a Fortress

THE RED ARMY PREVAILED DURING A TWO-MONTH EFFORT TO CAPTURE THE PRUSSIAN CITY OF KÖNIGSBERG

BY BASTIAAN WILLEMS



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of a stand to the last man, from March 8, 1944, onward Hitler had been designating key cities to become *Festungen,* and Königsberg was no exception to this policy. Koch, the advocate of a steadfast defense, fled Königsberg a few days later and would visit the city only a handful of times during the siege. Instead, at the head of its defense stood Festungskommandant (Fortress Commander) General Otto Lasch, a battle-hardened and well-respected soldier. Lasch doubted whether the city's garrison would hold for more than a week but nevertheless started working energetically on his assignment.

On the evening of January 28, Soviet tanks stood only 10 kilometers from the city center and, much to Lasch's surprise, decided to bypass the city and encircle it. A day later, the city was completely surrounded. Under Lasch's command, two of the exhausted divisions that had withdrawn into the city, the 1st and the 5th Panzer, were completely revived as tanks were repaired in the city's workshops and personnel were recruited from the local Hitler Youth.

Other divisions were patched up as well, Alarm-Einheiten (emergency units) were created, and the different Volkssturm units (Nazi militia) were placed under Lasch's command. On February 17, 1945, after a little more than two weeks of restructuring the forces within Konigsberg, Lasch received an order from the Third Panzer Army. As the garrison of the city was considered strong enough, it was ordered to assist Armee-Abteilung Samland in opening a corridor from Pillau, on the western tip of the Samland peninsula, to Konigsberg

Although Lasch considered it a gamble, he regarded it as necessary and allocated as much force as possible. When successful, the corridor would allow civilians to escape the city and food and reinforcements to come in. The Germans would attack the flanks of the exhausted Thirty-ninth Army of Ivan Lyudnikov, which after a demanding advance had taken up positions on the Samland along the Frische Haff. On the morning of February 19, the attack, code-named Westwind, commenced. The German divisions on the western tip of the Samland attacked east, while the divisions from Konigsberg pushed west. On the afternoon of February 20, the two groups linked up and eventually recaptured an area of almost 200 kilometers, a stunning achievement.

The fighting in the corridor continued for another week, leaving the Thirty-ninth Army severely battered, after which both belligerents dug in along the new front line. The gamble had paid off handsomely. That week, the defenders of the fortress managed to inflict yet another major blow to the Soviets. On February 18, a shell fragment killed General Chernyakhovsky, leaving the Third Belorussian Front temporarily without a commander.

Early in the morning of February 22, two Soviet commanders discussed the plans for the elimination of the German troops in East Prussia. Just a few days earlier, both had held different positions, although there was little reason to feel uneasy in their new roles. The first was Marshal Aleksandr Vasilevsky, who replaced Chernyakhovsky. Marshal Vasilevsky had been chief of the STAVKA (the Soviet General Staff) before his appointment as commander of the Third Belorussian Front and was therefore, like no other, aware of the situation in East Prussia. Earlier that month, he had asked Stalin to give him a position in the field, and now he was had the chance to prove himself.

The other man was General Ivan Bagramyan, who was appointed second in command of the Third Belorussian Front. Only hours earlier, he had been commander of the First Baltic Front, which was being disbanded. Its armies, from that time on designated as the Samland Group, were absorbed in Vasilevsky's Third Belorussian Front, which as a result totaled a massive 10 field armies and two air armies.

The main motivation for the merging was rather simple: having all armies under a single command would allow manpower and equipment to be maneuvered more easily. "Our task," Vasilevsky explained to Bagramyan, "is while having only a slight overall superiority, to achieve an overwhelming superiority in those areas where we are going attack the enemy."

East Prussia had to be captured one chunk at the time. The biggest chunk was for Vasilevsky, who had to destroy 26 German divisions trapped in the Heiligenbeil pocket. In the meantime, Bagramyan was given the task of capturing Königsberg and the rest of the Samland. Unlike the German units in the Heiligenbeil pocket, the majority of the troops around Konigsberg could rely on earlier prepared fortified defensive positions. Overcoming them would require extensive interaction between all branches of his Armies.

Several of the units Bagramyan received to capture Konigsberg had been depleted by the East Prussian offensive. Lyudnikov's Thirty-ninth Army, which lay to the northwest of the city, had been involved in the fighting from the beginning of the offensive. Its strength had been diminished by almost half, and the German breakout of mid-February had weakened the army even further. Of the Forty-third Army, which had been fighting from January 22 onward, only 23,000 of the initial 80,000 remained. It had taken up positions north and east of the city, as a German attack in that direction was unlikely. The Eleventh Guards Army lay south of the city. It had been in action the shortest of the three armies, but on its path through East Prussia it had encountered the most opposition. The state of their troops made all Soviet commanders deem a swift attack on the city as hopeless, and Bagramyan ordered his troops to go on the defensive.

Sooner or later, however, the Samland Group would have to go on the offensive. Bagramyan and his chief of staff, Colonel General Vladimir Kurasov, drew up a preliminary plan, using the Thirty-ninth Army to cleave through the city's

Bundesarchiv Bild 183-R98401 Photo. Unknown

Awaiting the Red Army attack that will surely come, members of a German Volkssturm unit man positions along a trenchline on the outskirts of Königsberg on January 20, 1945.

outer defensive ring from the northwest to separate the fortress from the Samland. Simultaneously, the Eleventh Guards Army was to break through the outer ring from the south. The Forty-third Army was given the task of capturing the northern and eastern parts of the city.

On March 7, Marshal Vasilevsky brought some good news to the Samland Group. He was able to free the small Fiftieth Army from the fighting at Heiligenbeil to assist in the storming of Königsberg and assured Bagramyan that he could count on the support of all aircraft present in East Prussia, some 2,500 planes.

Although Vasilevsky was preoccupied with the fighting for the Heiligenbeil pocket, he had given serious thought to the capture of Konigsberg as well. Since Lyudnikov's army still had not fully recovered from the damage of the German counterattack, he decided it would not take part in the actual fighting for the city. For Lyudnikov this was a huge disappointment, since, in the words of Bagramyan, "Lyudnikov had been dreaming about it, seeking revenge for the latest setback."

Instead, the army was to capture a small but vital area west of the city to prevent the German troops in the Samland from assisting in its defense and prevent an escape of German troops from Königsberg. A major role in the capture of the city was given to General Afanasii Beloborodov's Forty-third Army instead. His troops were to seize the northern and northwestern parts of Konigsberg and advance to the heart of the city. Given its small size, the Fiftieth Army had been assigned to capture the eastern suburbs of the city. Lastly, the task of the Eleventh Guards Army remained the same: capturing the entire southern half of the city.

Hitler's generals had always dismissed fortress strategy as incorrect, but Königsberg showed that it could certainly yield results. Five worn-down German divisions (this number varied throughout the period) contained four Soviet armies, an astonishing achievement. Königsberg owed a lot to its outer defensive ring of late 19th-century forts, which had been connected by a vast maze of trenches. Despite the fact that all the casemates and forts were outdated, they served as the backbone of the defense and housed a considerable number of defenders.

Soviet aerial reconnaissance photographed the city some 10 times to keep up to date, and the front command had a 36-square-meter electrical relief model of Königsberg and its defenses constructed to study German positions in depth. To prevent the evacuation of German troops, the Baltic Fleet mined the Konigsberg channel between Pillau and Königsberg. Lectures on the political and military importance of Königsbergor were held for officers participating in the siege. Reinforcements were coming from as far as the Ukraine and Moldova.

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

German soldiers, two of them clad in snow white camouflage apparel, prepare for a counterattack against the Red Army in East Prussia. This photo was taken in February 1944, and a Sturmgeschütz IV self-propelled assault gun is also visible at right.

There was little doubt among the troops that the storming of the city would be brutal. Thousands of them would lose their lives, and indulging themselves in the available pleasures of confiscated alcohol while they still had the opportunity seemed perfectly logical.

Until the end of March the Soviet soldiers had been observing the city, knowing that they would soon receive the order to storm it. "You know, I am often looking in the direction of Konigsberg," wrote nurse Anna Michajlovna, "It is clearly visible. You can distinguish yards, a monastery, plant chimneys and trees. When I look at the city of Königsberg, it reminds me of Stalingrad—the heroic city, the city of glory."

Lasch, in the meantime, was working feverishly to improve the defenses of the city. He enforced iron rule upon the remaining population (some 130,000) and had every able body contribute to it. Men were forbidden to leave the city without notification; women and children were little better off as measures for evacuation were extremely poor. There was a dramatic increase in court-martial cases and death sentences. Public executions were the order of the day, performed by the Army, the Nazi Party, and the SS. On the other hand, some 900 prisoners were released from jail in the earliest stage of the siege under the condition that they contribute to the defense of Königsberg. Despite the harsh situation, many inhabitants decided to stay in the city. Even after the creation the corridor between Königsberg and Pillau, relatively few people left as horror stories about the appalling conditions in Pillau and tales about the sinking of large ocean liners filled with refugees spread. In Konigsberg, at least, there was no scarcity of food and drink; even a cinema and the banks were open.

During March, the Soviet troops started their buildup for the assault on Konigsberg, moving matériel to designated areas. For the Germans, a shortage of artillery shells meant they had to watch powerlessly and could do little to stop it. Lasch believed an attack on the fortress was imminent. His superior, General Vincenz Muller, the commander of Army Group North, was of a different opinion. He estimated that the Soviets would strike first in the direction of Pillau, thereby cutting off the entire Samland and blocking the escape route to the Reich.

Therefore, in late March, General Muller decided to remove the two most battleworthy divisions from Königsberg, the 1st and the 5th Panzer, which were placed farther west on the Samland peninsula. These divisions were the two Lasch had worked so hard on to get back into shape, and their departure from the city made him lose all hope for its retention. He asked to be relieved of his position as fortress commander.

Muller, annoyed by Lasch's complaints, assured Lasch that he would soon be relieved. The last thing the fortress needed was a defeatist commander. For Lasch, unfortunately, his relief would not come in time.

The units that remained in Festung Konigsberg by late March were two worn-down

ullstein bild / The Granger Collection, New York

ABOVE: A pair of Red Army soldiers aims their automatic weapons at German positions while awaiting orders to move forward during fighting in the suburbs of Königsberg in April 1945. OPPOSITE: Soviet forces held off attacks by the German Samland Group and assailed the city of Königsberg from three sides. The bulk of German forces inside Königsberg were originally deployed to maintain contact with the Samland Group to the west.

infantry divisions, the 69th and the 367th, and two Volksgrenadier divisions, the 561st and the 548th. They were supported by two Kampfgruppen (battle groups), Mikosch and Schubert, and some 5,000 men of the Volkssturm. In total, the defenders numbered, according to a report to the German high command, some 47,800 men. Furthermore, the fortress possessed 224 artillery pieces but a mere 16 self-propelled guns.

Even when taking into account that by early April the defenders were joined by the staff of the 61st Division and that the 5th Panzer Division would assist in the defense of the city as well, it was perfectly clear that these numbers were completely insufficient to halt the Soviet storm. Opposing the Germans were 36 rifle divisions, two mortar divisions, and five artillery divisions, as well as six antiaircraft divisions supported by an armada consisting of 41 aviation divisions. Although the Soviet divisions were considerably smaller in size than their German counterparts, the odds were indisputably in favor of the attackers

By late March, everyone in Königsberg believed the storming of the city was just days away. Soviet planes had been dropping leaflets over the city stating that the people could celebrate their Easter but after that their days were numbered.

Eventually, the Soviets kept their word. The day after Easter, April 1, was foggy and grounded the Red Air Force. The artillery, nevertheless, went to work, gradually increasing in intensity. Some 5,000 guns and mortars, together with 300 rocket launchers, started to stir. Half of this might consisted of large-caliber guns, including guns ranging from 203mm to 305mm. During the first day of the artillery bombardment, the artillerists mainly used small-caliber guns to remove the "pillow" of earth from the forts. During the next three days, heavier guns destroyed communications, pinned down the German defenders in their bunkers, and demolished some fortifications.

Meanwhile, at Vasilevsky's headquarters, the last preparations were being made for the attack. As of April 3, the Samland Group was disbanded, and its troops were absorbed by the Third Belorussian Front. Vasilevksy, as the front commander, would oversee the assault on Königsberg, although Bagramyan stayed closely involved. By the end of the day, the bad weather showed no sign of improvement, and Vasilevsky called Stalin to ask for instructions. After the phone call, he told the awaiting Bagramyan and his staff, "He wants us to make haste. The Berlin operation is close on our heels, you know.... We must get going."

On the morning of April 6, Bagramyan was near the little town of Fuchsberg, a short distance from Konigsberg. Just when he was put through on the phone to report to Vasilevsky about the outcome of a reconnaissance effort, he heard "intermittent booming noises" coming from the opposite side of the city. "Katyushas [rockets] were heralding the start of the artillery preparations by the Eleventh Army. They were seconded by a chorus of heavy guns. Although the explosions were a long distance away, I could see the glass vibrating in the window panes."

It was the last preliminary bombardment, three hours prior to unleashing the ground troops at noon. The morning fog prevented Soviet aircraft from operations that morning, but it hardly dampened Vasilevsky's spirit. "Good music, isn't it?" he asked Bagramyan. "I only wish I could also hear the airmen.'"

Heavy fighting started as soon as the artillery stopped. In the south, soldiers of the Eleventh Guards Army had been crawling toward the front line while the shells were still falling. Within minutes after the barrage stopped, they were grimly fighting. On the flanks of the Soviet advance lay two forts on the left, Fort VIII and Fort Friedrich Wilhelm IV. On the right was Fort X, also known as Kanitz. In January, Soviet troops had taken Fort IX, known as Donha, which lay in between.

The German garrisons resisted fiercely, and it was decided that the first wave of attack would move around them, leaving their capture to the second echelon, a tactic that was followed throughout Konigsberg. The two forts were cause for concern, but the bulk of the army could successfully moved into Königsberg's southern suburbs, Prappeln and Ponarth.

There, the Soviets were temporarily halted by camouflaged antitank guns and tanks dug into the ground. Against the initial plan, Eleventh Guards Army commander General Kuzma Galitsky decided to commit his entire second echelon to join the battle in the late afternoon. By that time, the weather had improved somewhat, which meant that the Army aircraft could assist. By the end of the day, Galitsky could proudly report that his troops had advanced four kilometers, which made the day a success for the army

To the north, the day progressed successfully as well. The Forty-third Army had completely cleared Charlottenburg, the northernmost suburb of the city, despite the fact that Lasch had committed the fortress reserve in that area. Furthermore, the Soviets had encircled two forts, Friedrich Wilhelm III and Lehndorf

In the northwest, the Thirty-ninth Army advanced somewhat slowly as it was repeatedly counterattacked by the 5th Panzer Division. Nevertheless, it managed to cut the railroad from Königsberg to Pillau, although the highway to its south remained in German hands. The right flank of the Fiftieth Army, bolstered

by the First Tank Corps, dislodged the defenses in the suburb of Beydritten and stormed Fort Gneisenau. On its left flank, one of the Fiftieth Army's three corps was used to pin down the garrisons of five forts, Quednau, Barnekow, Bronszat, Groeben, and Stein, consolidating Soviet gains northeast of the city into a continuous line. The Fiftieth Army movement prevented the German 367th Division from participating in the defense of other vital areas.

During the day the weather cleared up, and in the afternoon the air force could for the first time operate in full strength. The daily deployment of 2,500 aircraft was a masterpiece in itself. The First, Third, and Fifteenth Air Armies came from the south, east, and north, while planes from the Baltic Fleet came from the west. Long-range bombers came from all sides.

Late on the night of April 6, Soviet troops attacked Fort Lehndorf. Self-propelled 122mm guns were brought in, firing point-blank at the fort. This proved too much to bear for the defenders, and the 200 remaining men capitulated.

The next day, April 7, started with a brief but powerful artillery barrage. Beloborodov's army advanced into the suburb of Juditten and continued toward the city center. But later in the day the Soviet advance came to a halt in the suburb of Hufen. In the fighting for the Beydritten suburb, the Fiftieth Army also slowed down considerably. It had advanced only about 1½ kilometers. The Forty-third Army's progress was even more disappointing and could be measured only in hundreds of meters.

To the west, Lyudnikov's Thirty-ninth Army also advanced painfully slowly. By the end of the day, it had still not managed to cut off the city from the rest of the Samland but instead had to fight off some 18 counterattacks from the 5th Panzer Division. However, the sluggish advance of these three armies did not mean that the day had been unsuccessful for the attackers. They occupied most of Königsberg's reserves, which meant that the Eleventh Guards Army in the south could make good headway.

The German defenders zealously held onto every city block, but the overwhelming Soviet superiority in men and arms took a heavy toll. To make matters worse, the pleas of the fortress command to the Fourth Army to use the 5th Panzer Division to check the Thirty-ninth Army were initially granted, but as Lyudnikov's men were attacking the 1st Division west of the city as well, 5th Panzer was redirected there and its support of the fortress was called off.

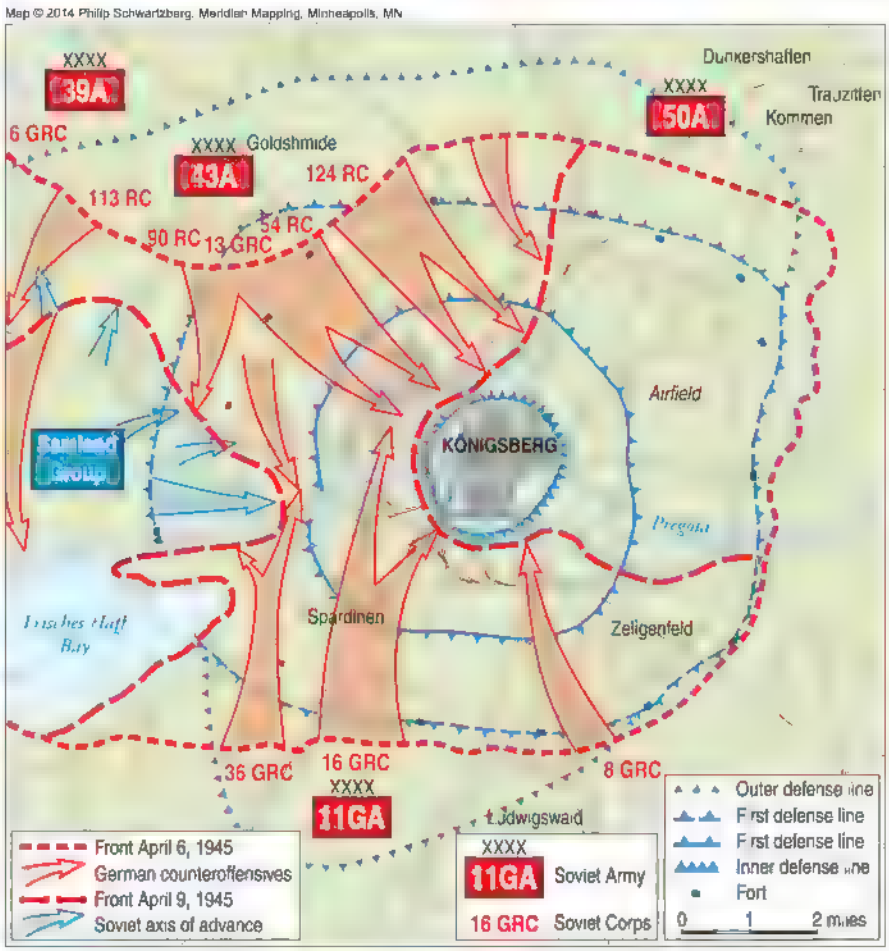
Soviet troops, meanwhile, were advancing through the southern suburbs. On their right flank, the 8th Corps was able to make considerable progress. The German defenders had to give up the small suburb of Schönfliess, while Fort Kanitz fell as well. By the end of the day, the corps had advanced toward Rosenau, a suburb directly adjacent to the city center. The swift capture of this large area was a fine result, but it was no surprise.

Lasch and Muller gave absolute priority to retaining a connection to the Samland west of the city, and the majority of the German forces were deployed there. It was perfectly clear to Lasch that when the Soviets crossed the Pregel River in the western part of the city, Königsberg would be lost within a matter of hours. On the left of the advance, therefore, two other Soviet corps encountered much heavier resistance. Battle Group Schubert, a unit mainly consisting of police and SS units, defended the Nasser Garten suburb just south of the river.

To impede Soviet progress, the Pregel had been allowed to flood the area when the attack on the city began. Unfortunately for the defenders, this decision worked to their disadvantage. Battle Group Schubert was destroyed. To the east, the German 69th Division was slowly being driven out of Ponarth, and by the end of the day its units were fighting at the southern edge of the city center. The major strongpoint in this area was the Hauptbahnhof, the main railway station, at which the fighting erupted in the late afternoon. Unable to break the resistance around the station with two first-echelon divisions, the commander of the 16th Guards Corps deployed his final division, the Eleventh Guards Division of his second echelon, which meant that the entire corps was eventually fighting for the area. The battle lasted well into the next afternoon.

The Soviets were unable to cross the Pregel, and the Eleventh Guards and Forty-third Armies had still not linked up. Nevertheless, half of Königsberg had been captured by the Eleventh Guards Army by the night of April 8, while another quarter had been captured by the Forty-third and Fiftieth Armies.

To prevent a Soviet linkup, Battle Group Mikosch was brought in from the still relatively quiet eastern sector, leaving its defense to elements of the 367th Infantry Division. Nevertheless, after the Soviet 36th Corps had managed to clear the area south of the Pregel, its forward elements, supported by aircraft, started



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ABOVE: Two Red Army soldiers fire their weapons in front of a blazing building during the final assault on the city of Königsberg. The soldier in the foreground fires a standard issue rifle, while the other soldier is firing an assault weapon with a long ammunition clip. RIGHT: The gutted Royal Castle lies a blackened hulk in the background of this photograph, and the poignant image has also captured a dead German soldier and his horse, which met the same fate, during the fighting that resulted in the fall of Königsberg. OPPOSITE: During operations to mop up the last vestiges of German resistance in Königsberg, Soviet troops move forward warily amid the rubble of the city on April 9, 1945. After a two-month siege, an aggressive Soviet effort took Königsberg in four days of intense fighting.

to cross the river that night. The rest of the corps followed the next morning.

The Soviet 8th Corps was embroiled in fierce fighting for the suburbs of Rosenau and Jerusalem. Although the German defenders were few in number and had to give up large areas, they were able to inflict heavy casualties. As a result, the corps reached the Pregel by the end of the day but did not have the manpower to cross it.

At the same time, the suburbs of Amalienau and Ratshof, just north of the Pregel, were attacked by Beloborodov's troops, whose 13th Corps was to join up with Galitsky's men. His 0th Corps was fighting somewhat to the west and was clearing out Juditten while simultaneously fending off counterattacks from the Samland.

The pressure from the peninsula became so powerful that Vasilevsky decided to withdraw some of Beloborodov's divisions from the fighting in Konigsberg and place them west of the city to block German units from the Samland.

As Galitsky's troops were already partly over the river and Beloborodov's troops had diminished in strength as a result of Vasilevsky's order, the linkup between the two armies was set to take place in Amalienau, just west of the city center. To prevent friendly fire, the artillery and the air force were ordered to divert their operations from the suburb. The last pockets of resistance in this area had to be eliminated in hand-to-hand fighting.

By 2 PM, the two Soviet armies had linked up, and the garrison of Konigsberg was surrounded. Almost immediately, Vasilevsky ordered leaflets dropped over the city urging the Germans to lay down their arms. The offer was ignored.

Lasch was asked to consider a breakout attempt, but he hesitated. The army commanders managed to contact Gauleiter Koch, who convinced General Müller to give his authorization. Müller wanted to hold on to Konigsberg at all costs and allocated only minor elements of the 561st Volksgrenadier Division to the attempt. Lasch knew that the chance of success was limited. He committed parts of the 548th and the remnants of the 61st Division, as well as the majority of the available artillery, to form a corridor. The party was given the task of leading the civilians out of the city.

At 11 PM, the units received the order to advance toward their starting positions, but the destroyed city made orientation hard and movement even harder. Only at 2 AM did the attack finally commence. From the onset, the rubble forced the units to disperse and lose contact. Before long, no group comprised more than 50 men, which made them easy prey for the Soviets.

Eventually, some of these groups did manage to break through the Soviet encirclement, but a safe corridor was impossible to establish. Large groups of civilians were targeted by Soviet artillery, turning their evacuation into carnage. Surviving civilians and soldiers fled back to the city. The attempt had failed.

Stubborn fighting continued throughout the night and into the morning. Despite their best efforts, the German defenders had no choice but to slowly fall back toward the inner city. After the capture of the Amalienau suburb, Galitsky's troops pushed northeastward, capturing the large Luisenwahl cemetery and the Tiergarten (zoo) and continuing to the southern tip of the Oberteich in conjunction with the 54th Corps of the Forty-third Army.

National Archives

The remaining elements of Galitsky's army crossed the two arms of the Pregel south of the city center. By the morning of April 9, the core of the defenders had been driven into the last line of defense, a series of forts that surrounded the old city center, a mere four square kilometers. By that time, the German 69th, 548th, and 561st Divisions had been destroyed. Remnants of the 61st Division were positioned in bastion Sternwarte to the west, while the 367th Division had taken up positions in and around bastion Grolman. The southern sector was defended by Battle Groups Schubert and Mikosch.

East of the city center, two corps of the Fiftieth Army encountered little opposition north of

the Pregel and were able to clear the entire area to the northeast and east of the city center. The 69th Division took the five forts, a third of all forts of the outer ring, virtually without a fight.

In the west, the Forty-third Army was to assist the Thirty-ninth Army, which was still fighting off elements of the 5th Panzer Division, with two of its corps. Beloborodov's army was to regroup and attack along the Frische Haff to speed up the destruction of the remaining German troops in the Samland. His army captured Fort Konigin Luise and Herzog v. Holstein. By the morning of April 9, Soviet troops started penetrating the last line of defense in force. Lasch decided to open surrender negotiations.

As German troops were being cut off from the Samland, separated by a five-kilometer gap, Lasch knew that no help would be forthcoming. His troops lacked even the most basic ammunition and provisioning, and a cessation of the fighting could perhaps save lives. In the afternoon, he discussed the possibility of capitulation with his staff. A little later he announced his decision to the divisional commanders he was able to reach.

The next step was to reach the Soviets, and Lasch sent messages to the commanders of strongpoints and divisions, urging them to establish contact whenever possible. One of these commanders was an Oberstleutnant (lieutenant colonel) Kerwin, the commandant of the Trommelplatz Kaserne.

Shortly after midday, he received a letter written by Lasch. "My dear Kerwin! I have decided to surrender because I have no more connection with the troops. The artillery is without ammunition and I cannot justify further bloodshed and this terrible strain on the nerves of the civilian population. Try to get into contact with the Russians. Have them immediately cease fire in order to send a peace envoy to me, so I can surrender Königsberg."

Delivering this letter to the Soviets was the task of three envoys, Rittmeister Steincke, Hauptmann Georges, and Feldwebel Gramlow, but the task proved easier said than done. Even though they carried a white flag, they were almost immediately fired upon by Nazi Party members, who had taken up positions nearby. Kerwin received a message that all three had died. He sent two more men, who were also fired upon by the same group.

Shortly afterward, some of the party members stormed into the Trommelplatz Kaserne. "Where is Oberstleutnant Kerwin? He has to be shot! He is sending peace envoys to Ivan. He has to be court-martialed!"

After hearing that Kerwin acted on Lasch's orders, the men calmed down somewhat. A little later, much to Kerwin's surprise, he was summoned to a store, where a Russian messenger was waiting. One of the men of the first group had actually managed to get through the lines, and Kerwin was being sent for personally. At 7 PM he arrived at the headquarters of the Eleventh Guards Division, where its commander, General Tsyganov, was already waiting. The lack of Lasch's original letter made the atmosphere between the two men tense, but in the end Kerwin managed to convince the Soviet officer that his mission was genuine. Tsyganov notified Galitzky. Galitzky reported to Vasilevsky, who gave permission to accept the capitulation.

At 10 PM, guided by Kerwin, the chief of staff of the 11th Division, Lt. Col. Janowski, together with Captains Fedorenko and Spitalnikov, was dispatched to deliver the ultimatum for an unconditional surrender to Lasch.

Half an hour later, Kerwin reported to Lasch: "General, I have executed, as ordered, the saddest task of a soldier. Here is the Russian envoy."

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Within 15 minutes the ultimatum was signed. At 10:45 PM, Lasch ordered the immediate cessation of resistance. Not all of his subordinates, however, acquiesced in this decision. On the morning of April 10, after hearing the city had capitulated, the men of Kampfgruppe Schubert declared Lasch to be deposed and appointed one of their own officers as his successor. The remainder of the battle group, some 150 men, decided to occupy the old castle of Konigsberg and fight to the last bullet.

By then, Soviet tanks had already reached the adjacent square and started shelling the building. Casualties mounted. Some Germans surrendered. Those who attempted to escape the carnage were wiped out.

Senior German commanders were brought before their Soviet counterparts for interrogation in the early afternoon of April 10. Lasch, who had just heard that his family had been imprisoned as a result of his capitulation and that he had been condemned to death in absentia by Hitler, had much to worry about. He had been backstabbed by Gauleiter Koch, who had barely been in the fortress during the siege but now managed to profit from the capitulation.

In a shameless wireless message to Berlin, Koch had turned the events completely upside down. "The commander of Königsberg, Lasch, has used a moment of my absence of the fortress to cowardly surrender. I'll continue to fight on the Samland...."

The Soviet high command abhorred the decision of the "imbecile Führer," and thought highly of Lasch. As Lasch was quite willing to answer questions, Vasilevsky diverted somewhat from protocol and asked him to evaluate the outcome of the battle.

"It was impossible to know beforehand that a fortress like Konigsberg could fall so soon," Lasch bitterly admitted. "The operation has been well prepared and executed by the Russian high command."

Lasch was correct in his assessment. As a result of careful Soviet planning and execution, the fortress, which had been besieged for over two months, eventually fell within four days.

Bastiaan Willems is resident of the Netherlands. This is his first contribution to WWII History.

THE AMERICAN CAPTURE OF SAIPAN, GUAM, AND TINIAN IN THE MARIANAS SEALED THE FATE OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE

BY DAVID R. LIPPMAN

COMBAT HORROR ON SAIPAN

IN the high summer of 1944, the United States was coiling a massive fist in the Central Pacific aimed directly at the Mariana Islands, specifically Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. By taking these islands in the Marianas, the Americans could turn them into airbases for their Boeing B-29 Superfortress bombers, which could in turn pound Japan's factories and cities into rubble.

Saipan was the major target. To seize this island chain from the Japanese, the Americans assigned the U.S. Fifth Fleet, under Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, centered around 15 aircraft carriers and 10 fast battleships, 535 combatant ships and auxiliaries in all. The assault force would consist of 130,000 Marines and Army troops organized into the 3rd Amphibious Corps and the 5th Amphibious Corps. The latter formation, under Lt. Gen. Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith, was tasked with invading Saipan. It consisted of the 2nd Marine Division and the 4th Marine Division. Its floating reserve was the Army's 27th Infantry Division, drawn from the New York State National Guard.

Operation Forager, as the descent on the Marianas was called, was a massive assault: Saipan was 3,500 miles from Pearl Harbor, and troops

Amid the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers, a Marine of the U.S. 2nd Division raises his M1 carbine to take aim at the lurking enemy on Saipan during the advance on Mount Marpi. The bitter battle for Saipan resulted in heavy casualties for both sides.

All photos, National Archives

were embarked from Hawaii and the West Coast. A seaborne logistical framework of enormous proportions would be needed to keep the invading ships and men supplied with shells, bullets, and food. D-day was set for June 15.

The defense of Saipan was headed by the newly organized 31st Army, under Lt. Gen. Hideyoshi Obata, which was also responsible for the Caroline and Palau Islands. To hold these islands, Tokyo began pulling troops from the Manchurian border with the Soviet Union. Among the young men in the Japanese 118th Regiment was Sergeant Takeo Yamauchi, a conscripted Russian-language student, who admired Soviet communism. "We were laid out on shelves like broiler chickens. You had your pack, rifle, all your equipment with you," he said later.

Obata now had an army of 22,702 men on Saipan, but it was an incredibly disorganized force. The naval forces were commanded by Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, commander of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the disaster for the Imperial Japanese Navy at Midway in June 1942. Nagumo had been assigned to command Saipan's 6,690 officers and sailors, which included 800 men of the 1st Special Naval Landing Force, Japan's version of America's Marines, and 400 men of the 55th Naval Guard Force.

It all added up to 43,682 Japanese defenders on the rocky, craggy island, but Obata was not one of them. When the Americans arrived, their invasion caught him returning from an inspection trip to the Palaus, and he got no farther than Guam. The land battle would be conducted by Lt. Gen. Yoshitsugu Saito, centered on his own 43rd Infantry Division. His other forces included the 47th Independent Mixed Brigade, the 7th and 16th Independent Engineer Regiments, the 3rd Independent Mountain Artillery Regiment and its two dozen 75mm guns, the 25th Antiaircraft Regiment, and the surviving 36 medium T-97 and 12 light tanks of the 9th Tank Regiment.

Saito's plan was simple: defeat the enemy on the beaches. To do so, Saito planned immediate counterattacks to weaken the Americans. Saito's tanks would then deliver the knockout punch. Problem was, he did not know where the Americans would land, so he had to defend the entire coastline.

The Americans, schooled in Japanese tenacity by bloody battles in the Solomons, New Guinea, and Tarawa, approached the invasion of Saipan with the thoroughness and technical skill that would be their hallmark throughout the Pacific campaigns. Both the Marines and the Army relied on solid combinations of artillery, armor, and infantry in battle, with the Army's well-proven tactic of "holding attacks" to draw off the main defenders while a second force sought an opening on the flanks to defeat the enemy.

Operation Forager got down to business on June 11, when Spruance's vast fleet steamed to within 200 miles of the Marianas and the carriers began turning into the wind to launch 200 Grumman F6F Hellcat fighters to hammer the 14 Japanese airfields on the islands. A heavy naval bombardment followed.

The American landing target was the four-mile long beachfront that stretched from a mile south of Garapan through Charan Kanoa and down to Agingan Point, just above the southwestern tip of the island. The beaches were designated Red, Green, and Blue, from north to south. The northern beach was the responsibility of the 6th and 8th Regiments of the 2nd Marine Division, while the 23rd and 25th Regiments of the 4th Marine Division would take the southern sector. Each battalion was responsible for about 600 yards of front.

At 7 AM, the shelling stopped, and 34 LSTs (Landing Ship Tanks) steamed up to the line of departure, two miles from shore, and began disgorging amtrac armored amphibious vehicles. More than 719 of them, jammed with eight battalions of Marines, headed ashore as 155 planes roared over them, strafing and bombing the beaches. The first wave of Americans hit the beach at 8:44 AM.

Like a week before in Normandy on the other side of the world, chaos immediately reigned. The 2nd Battalion, 8th Regiment landed on Green

Beach 1 instead of Green Beach 2, the 3rd/8th's chosen assault site. Marines from the 6th Regiment landed on the wrong stretch of Red Beach. In a matter of minutes the commanding officers of all four invading battalions of the 6th and 8th Marines were wounded.

Saito had placed his guns well, keeping them concealed and in depressions to avoid destruction from American shells, and now they hammered the invaders. The shelling was so intense that the Americans thought the beach was mined. On the southern beaches, Yellow 1 and 2, the 25th Marines also came ashore under heavy fire. The 1st/25th Marines hit Yellow 2 Beach, and the battalion's LVTs (Landing Vehicles Tracked) headed back out to sea without unloading ammunition, mortars, or machine guns. The battalion was pinned down for an hour. The 2nd/25th was able to get 700 yards inland, but the 23rd Regiment achieved only 100 yards inland.

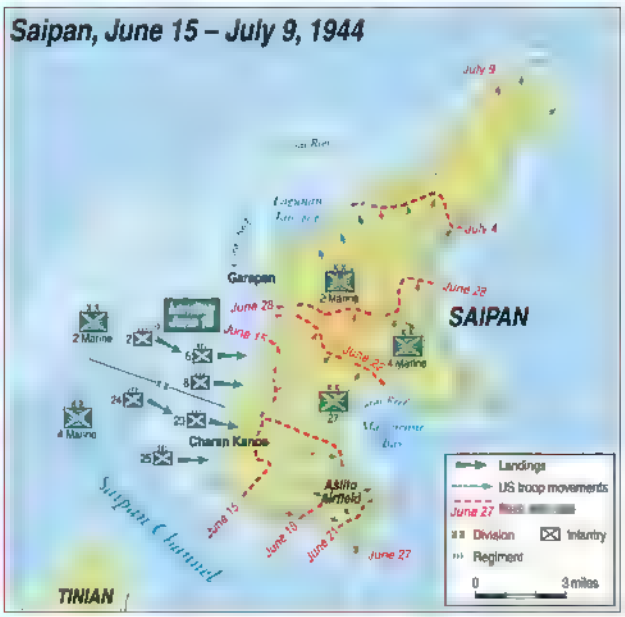
Despite the heavy fire, the Americans refused to be dislodged from their beaches. With their usual determination and firepower, the Marines attacked into Charon Kanoa, it was the first time American troops had invaded a full-scale Japanese community. By noon, however, the 6th Marines had suffered 35 percent casualties, and the regiment's boss, Colonel James Risely, aware that most of his senior officers were dead or wounded, assigned junior officers to take over higher duties.

Meanwhile, three companies of the 8th Marines faced Japanese guns and pillboxes in a woodland called Afetna Point, which enabled the enemy to pour enfilading fire on the Americans. The 8th Marines fought through pillboxes, shrubs, dense foliage, and Japanese troops. Company G of the 2nd/8th Marines had been issued a generous supply of shotguns, and the Americans used them with good effect against the Japanese.

South of Afetna Point, the 4th Marine Division pushed forward, struggling to gain a large concrete ramp that would be a perfect landing spot for the 46 gleaming new M-4 Sherman tanks, whose 75mm guns were superior to any Japanese machine, and a platoon of specially equipped flame tanks mounting Canadian Ronson flame guns that could spew a stream of fire up to 80 yards. The problem was getting the tanks ashore. Some of the tanks made it, but others never reached the shore, their landing craft sunk on the run-in by Japanese guns.

Although the tanks were having trouble coming ashore, the 4th Marine Division's artillery was in battery soon after the landing. Two battalions of 75mm pack howitzers and three of 105mm howitzers were landed and began a spectacular artillery duel with Japanese guns,

ABOVE: Among the first waves of U.S. Marines to hit the beach on Saipan on June 15, 1944, these men take cover behind a small dune or mound beside the hull of an amtrac (vehicle). Three more waves of Marines came forward in support of the initial landings, and both the Marines and soldiers of the U.S. Army fought their way across the island. RIGHT: Following their initial landings on the western beaches of Saipan, U.S. forces found out for the ordeal battle that followed. In just over three weeks, the strategically important island in the Marianas archipelago was secured.



which gave the division's commander, Maj. Gen. Harry Schmidt, some relief. His command post was a foxhole 50 yards from the water under heavy Japanese fire.

Life was no easier for the Japanese defenders. Sergeant Yamauchi and his pals were holding their ground at 2 PM when a second lieutenant came up, the adjutant from battalion headquarters. Yamauchi charged. Only two men joined him. "I suddenly felt something hot on my neck. Blood. I'm hit, I thought. But it was just a graze. I was too petrified to move. I couldn't even shoot anymore," Yamauchi recalled.

Realizing his attack was doomed, he ordered his two buddies to withdraw, but both were hit, one dead, the other wounded in the face. Yamauchi ran back to his trench alone to find the adjutant had disappeared, the rest of his squad still dug in.

By sunset, 20,000 Americans had gained a beachhead some 10,000 yards long and 1,000 yards deep, half the terrain expected to be taken, manned by most of the two divisions supported by seven artillery battalions and most of two tank battalions. Several hundred Americans were dead.

Saito was confident, but his men were not. He ordered only 36 T-97 tanks and 1,000 infantrymen of the 136th Infantry Regiment, under Major Tirashi Hirakushi, a former public relations officer, to attack. Someone brought up the regimental colors to inspire the men. Yamauchi and his battered squad were told to hold the trenches while the rest of the men attacked.

Chaos reigned from the beginning. Hirakushi was relieved of his job of leading the attack and ordered to find the general, or at least his body. Another officer was assigned to head the attack at the last minute, which weakened unit cohesion. The new boss mounted the lead tank and ordered his men forward. Before the tank had gone half a mile, an American shell disabled it. Yamauchi heard his pals shuffling forward and fell asleep from exhaustion. The Americans were only 100 meters away.

With their usual ferocity, the Japanese infantry charged into the Marine defenses. As they lurched forward, the Marines lit up the sky with flares and .50-caliber machine-gun fire, waking up Yamauchi. The 6th Marines had heard the Japanese boots, tanks, clattering swords, and finally their bugles blaring battle calls. American machine guns began ripping into the Japanese attack. More than 700 Japanese soldiers died without gaining any ground.

Yamauchi decided he would play dead, lying face down in his trench. He had heard the Americans shot up Japanese corpses but was willing to take a chance to survive the battle. After several days, he rejoined a ragtag Japanese unit.

On the southern flank, the Japanese hurled a strong attack, backed by artillery and mortars, against the 25th Marines. The Japanese used civilians, including women and children, to mask their approach, and the Americans at first thought this was a civilian surrender. But when they neared the American lines, the Marines saw through the ruse and opened fire with 105mm howitzers, breaking up the attack.

Finally, at 5:30 AM, about 200 Japanese charged for the Charan Kanoa pier, at the seam between the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions. The 3rd/23rd destroyed the enemy, but the Japanese were able to briefly grab the pier and damage it badly

Heading for the Marines that are already fighting on Saipan, these soldiers of the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division file forward from their LST (landing ship, tank). The LSTs were required to anchor on the other side of a coral reef, and the soldiers had to wade ashore through the surf.

Tokyo was sending more help than inspiring words. The Combined Fleet had left its lairs in Japan and Singapore, bristling with guns, planes, and hate for Americans, and was headed for the Marianas. The Americans knew they were coming. Spruance delayed the June 18 date for the invasion of Guam and ordered the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division to commence landing on Saipan.

As dawn broke on Saipan, the Americans resumed the offensive. They did not advance too deeply on this second day of the invasion, instead devoting their energy to consolidating their positions, mopping up, and most importantly, unloading the rest of the two Marine divisions and bringing ashore Maj. Gen. Ralph Smith's 27th Infantry, starting with the division's 165th Infantry Regiment, under Colonel Gerard W. Kelley.

Meanwhile, Japanese ferocity had a sharp impact on the battlefield. The 2nd Marine Division ended the day with half of its company and battalion officers dead or wounded. In the 4th Marine Division's sector, Lt. Col. Maynard Schultz, boss of the 1st/24th Marines, was killed by artillery. Also impacted by Japanese shells were five companies of black Marines, the first employed in combat in the war, who came under fire while hauling ammunition and supplies to the front lines.

That night, the Japanese tried to counterattack again. Saito sent in the 136th Infantry Regiment and Colonel Takashi Goto's 9th Tank Regiment to launch a coordinated attack at 5 PM against the 6th Marine Regiment. The Navy's 1st Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force would take part as well. But his men were so disorganized, the attack did not go in until 3:30 AM, with Goto himself saddling up in his command T-97 tank and infantrymen riding the huge vehicles, some blaring bugles.

When the Japanese tanks lumbered toward battle, they made a vast noise that alerted the Marines and worried Jones. He had been told the Japanese might have as many as 200 tanks on Saipan. It sounded to him like all 200 were headed straight for him.

ABOVE: Following one of several abortive Japanese armored counters on Saipan, the burned-out hulks of their tanks lie strewn across an open field. The lightly armed and armored Japanese tanks were no match for the American Shermans, packing 75mm guns, or the antitank weapons of the American infantry.
RIGHT: Left to right, U.S. Marine General Holland M. Smith, commander of the V Amphibious Corps; Marine Major General Thomas E. Watson, commander of the 2nd Division; and Admiral Raymond Spruance, commander of U.S. naval forces in the Philippine Sea, confer during operations in the Marianas.
OPPOSITE: Shortly after landing on Saipan, African American Marines await the order to attack the enemy. These Marines rendered outstanding service during the bloody fight for the island.

In their dugouts, the Marines watched as the tanks rolled over and past them. Captain James Rollen leaped out of his foxhole and fired a grenade launcher at a T-97. It bounced off, and Rollen staggered out of the battle, eardrums damaged by concussion. Captain Norman Thomas took over moments later and was quickly killed.

As dawn broke, so did the Japanese attack. The surviving Japanese began retreating toward Mount Tipo Pale, while an offshore destroyer hurled shells after them, blasting a surviving tank. The Marines counted 31 wrecked T-97s and the bodies of more than 700 mangled Japanese soldiers and Marines, for a loss of about 70 leathernecks

Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith now cut orders to have the 2nd Marine Division be the northern pivot of a wheeling attack by Maj. Gen. Harry Schmidt's 4th Marine Division, which would push across the farmlands of southern Saipan to the east coast at Magicienne, then drive northward into the central highlands. The 27th Infantry would operate on the 4th Division's flank, reaching for Aslito Airfield. Once that was accomplished, the three divisions would undertake the daunting task of storming Mount Topatchau and driving across the island to the northern peak at Marpi Point.

Loud, crusty, and opinionated, Holland Smith had a common touch and concern for his Marines. Admiral Spruance provided regular gifts of five-gallon drums of ice cream from his ships' reefers, and every time they arrived Smith would shout out from his front window that any leatherneck in earshot should hurry over for the ice cream.

Steadily the Marines and GIs began their advance across Saipan. Under their boots and vehicles, the island's dirt roads turned to dust and mud. The southern third of Saipan was dominated by well-tended farms and villages, which grew sugar cane, corn, peas, cantaloupe, and potatoes.

At his tactical headquarters, Saito, having recovered his composure, studied his maps on the 17th and determined that he could not hold southern Saipan until the Imperial Navy had steamed up, smashed the American fleet, and relieved the garrison. Nevertheless, Saito was determined to hold the island, slowly retreating, buying time, and inflicting casualties

On the 18th, Holland Smith ordered his three divisions forward to sweep the southern portion of Saipan and take Aslito Airfield, enabling land-based planes to operate from Saipan. The 165th Infantry Regiment drew the assignment and went forward with artillery and tank support. At 10 AM, the troops crossed the airfield and pronounced it secured 16 minutes later.

The airfield was renamed Conroy Field in honor of Colonel Gardiner J. Conroy, who had commanded the 165th in its invasion of Makin and been killed there. The Marines soon renamed it Isely Airfield after a naval aviator who had been shot down over Saipan. The 165th moved on toward Nafutan Ridge, where they came under heavy Japanese fire.

Meanwhile, the 4th Marine Division advanced in the face of intense Japanese machine-gun fire and a sudden counterattack by two tanks. The tanks caused 15 casualties before they were driven off by bazookas and artillery.

That same day the Japanese made their major effort to defeat the U.S. Navy at the Battle of the Philippine Sea and suffered immense losses, withdrawing from the scene.

The next American land objective was Nafu-

tan Point, a short peninsula dominated by a high, craggy ridge, and Mount Nafutan, which stood 407 feet high. The Japanese defenders numbered about 1,050 men from the remnants of the 317th Independent Infantry Battalion and the 47th Independent Mixed Brigade along with some other stragglers. Behind them were frightened Japanese civilians. In command was Captain Sasaki, boss of the 317th.

The 27th Division was given the job of clearing Nafutan Point and came under heavy fire from Japanese pillboxes. The 105th Infantry tried to place shaped charges against the pillboxes to blast them open, but the fire was too heavy. The Americans tried outflanking the enemy, struggling through an exploding Japanese artillery dump. The 165th struggled through a slope made up of a coral formation studded with sharp rocks, pocked with holes, deep canyons, crevasses, and caves, overgrown with vines, small trees, and bushes. Fortunately, the natural defenses were

tougher than the Japanese.

After dark, the Japanese tried a 20-man counterattack, which was broken up. A group of 20 to 30 civilians stumbled into an American position and all were killed.

On June 20, Ralph Smith's GIs continued to struggle to gain Nafutan Point, using smoke screens to conceal their flanking movements. When the 1st Battalion of the 105th Infantry came under Japanese fire from snipers in a town, Lt. Col. William O'Brien, commanding the battalion, ordered the settlement burned down, with tanks, antitank guns, and flamethrowers doing the job. With artillery and tank support, the GIs steadily squeezed the Japanese, suffering light casualties, one man dead in the 105th and six in the 165th. With two regiments of the 27th engaged, the division's third regiment, the 106th, finally came ashore to serve as corps reserve. Meanwhile, the two Marine divisions pivoted on the invasion beaches to prepare for the big drive to clear the island from south to north.

On the 21st, the 27th continued to attack Nafutan Point. At 9:30 AM, the 1st/105th moved forward slowly without opposition, but at 12:55 PM it came under heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire in open terrain. The GIs withdrew and summoned tanks. On the 27th's extreme left, the fresh 2nd/105th, under Lt. Col. Leslie M. Jensen, went into attack in extremely difficult terrain, facing the nose of Mount Natufan, a sheer cliff that split the battalion front like the bow of a ship. The cliff was only 30 feet high, but the approach to it was a steep slope through a cane field's stubble, which lacked cover.

The battalion jumped off on schedule at 9:30 AM and was immediately hit by the usual small arms, machine-gun, and mortar fire. The Americans assaulted the cliff and reached its top, but could not hold on. Jensen called for rations, water, and artillery, which fired at point-blank range. The Americans ultimately forced the Japanese to withdraw.

However, the American advance was still moving slowly. On the 22nd, at 6 AM, the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions, backed by 18 battalions of artillery and naval and air support, launched a coordinated attack and made substantial gains on the lower slopes of Mount Tapotchau. The Marines faced counterattacks and heavy enemy fire, which was aggravated when a Japanese ammunition dump exploded.

Back at Nafutan Point, the 105th Infantry struggled against the Japanese, gaining little ground. Holland Smith warned Ralph Smith that if the 105th did not advance he would fire its colonel. Ralph Smith responded that the Japanese were holding difficult terrain.

Meanwhile, the battle raged on. Holland Smith ordered the 27th Division into the main attack, leaving Nafutan to a single rifle battalion and a platoon of six light tanks and very little artillery amid mountainous terrain.

Studying his maps, the 4th Marine Division's commander, General Harry Schmidt, regarded Holland Smith's plan as overly optimistic and penciled in a line for reorganization 2,000 yards short of Holland Smith's objective line. Even so, the Marines struggled to reach the line on Schmidt's map.

On the 23rd, the Army's 106th and 165th Regiments were ordered to attack a ridge north of their lines and a valley just west of it. The 3,600 Japanese defenders were from two units, the 118th and 136th Infantry Regiments. The Americans would come to name the valley "Death Valley" and the hills "Purple Heart Ridge."

Seven American regiments, two Army and five Marine, would make the assault. The first American objective was "Hill Love," and the 1st/165th led the way with a platoon of tanks from the 762nd Provisional Tank Battalion. The 3rd/165th tried to attack a little cove in the mountain wall studded with Japanese machine guns and their crews.

What the Army would call the Battle of the Caves raged on ferociously. The 762nd Tank Battalion sent 72 Shermans into action—only 18 were left at the day's end. The 3rd/106th came under Japanese mortar fire that took 31 men in less than a minute.

Watching this futile attack, Holland Smith fumed over the Army's poor showing. Studying the island from the 1,554-foot Tapotchau summit with a powerful Japanese telescope he found there, Holland Smith assessed Saipan's mountains and valleys. His Marines were taking a pounding but taking ground. The 2nd Marine Division had lost 2,514 men, while the 4th had lost 3,628. The 27th Division's two fresh regiments would now have to be the main assault force.

Now the differences between the Marine Corps and Army approach to war began to plague the American drive. Holland Smith and his Marines stressed high-cost frontal assaults and relied on speed, aggression, and violence to achieve their goals. Ralph Smith and his GIs favored the Army's standard holding attack, which relied on one force holding the enemy under pressure while a second force outflanked the defenders, relying on movement and firepower.

Holland Smith believed the 27th was "flat and listless," and he blamed Ralph Smith. He called in Army Maj. Gen. Sanderford Jarman, who was to take command of the island once it was secured and ordered him to visit Ralph Smith and convey the corps commander's displeasure. Holland Smith warned Ralph Smith that if the 27th was not an Army Division "and there would be a great cry sent up more or less of a political nature," he would immediately relieve Ralph Smith.

Holland Smith gave his subordinate one more day to make progress, but the Japanese were as stolid and ferocious as ever. The 5th Amphibious Corps attacked on Saturday, June 24, with the 8th Marines digging Japanese positions out with satchel charges, bazookas, and flamethrowers.

At least the Marines had a sense of progress,

despite suffering 812 casualties in the 4th Division over the 23rd and 24th and 333 in the 2nd for the same two days.

Meanwhile, Saito had angled his defenders to give a rough reception to the 27th Infantry in Death Valley, which in turn fronted Saito's headquarters. The Japanese general was determined to hold on, and he had 4,000 men backed by most of the 9th Tank Regiment's T-97s in position to do so. All of his caves deployed machine guns, mortars, or 75mm guns.

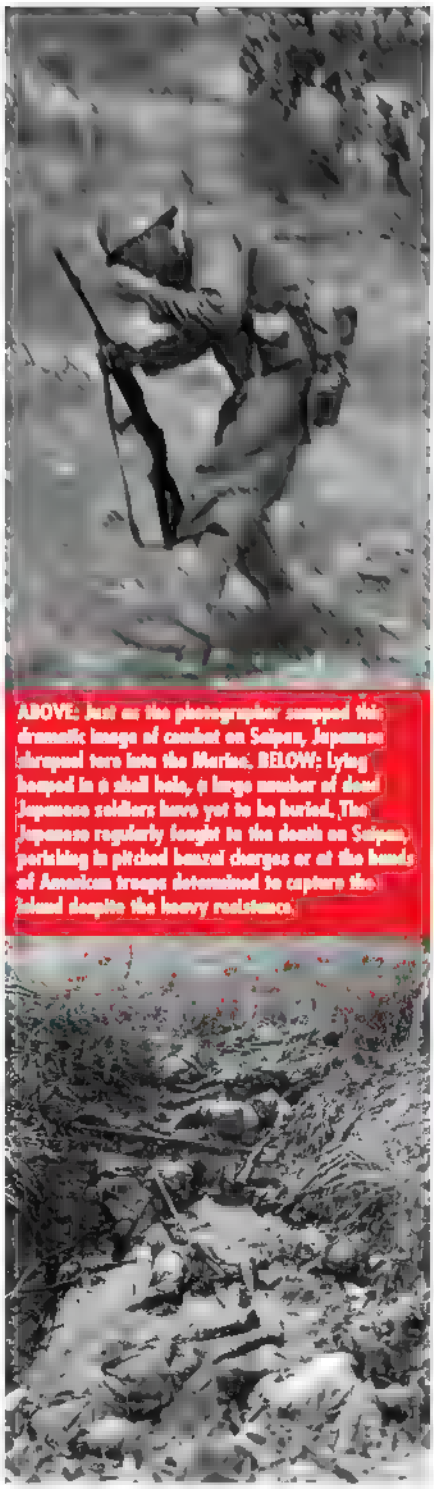
As June 24 dawned, Ralph Smith moved through his frontline units, personally directing the assault. The 165th Infantry jumped off right on time at 8 AM, seeking to storm Purple Heart Ridge—actually a series of hills connected by a ridgeline running in a northerly direction. The two lead battalions came under heavy fire, and many men were pinned down or killed. One battalion only advanced 150 yards for the entire day.

The 106th headed into Death Valley and came under such heavy mortar fire that many GIs had to fall back behind the line of departure. Ralph Smith radioed his commanders: "Advance of 50 yards in 1½ hours is most unsatisfactory. Start moving at once."

Around noon, a Marine jeep pulled up at 27th Infantry Division's forward command post, and a captain of the adjutant general's staff hopped out, saluted, and handed Ralph Smith a sealed envelope. Inside was a terse message from Holland Smith relieving Ralph Smith of his post. Maj. Gen. Jarman was to take over the 27th immediately.

Controversy would rage over this abrupt mid-battle dismissal, but the changes at the top did little to change the situation on the ground. Holland Smith's three divisions had now created a U-shaped front, with the 27th in the base of the U.

Jarman studied the maps and plans inherited from Ralph Smith and decided to use them, pushing the 106th Regiment eastward toward Chacha Village and then swerving northward to flank Purple Heart Ridge. But as the 106th did so, it came under murderous fire from Saito's well-protected 31st Army headquarters. The 106th Regiment was stalled by difficult terrain and determined Japanese fire. Jarman asked Ayers why the 106th did not skirt the eastern slope of Purple Heart Ridge or make any progress, and Ayers could offer neither excuse nor "explanation of anything he did during the day," Jarman reported later. "He stated he felt sure he could get his regiment in hand and forward the next morning. I told him he had one more chance and if he did not handle his regiment I would relieve him."



ABOVE: Just as the photographer snapped this dramatic image of combat on Saipan, Japanese shrapnel tore into the Marine. BELOW: Lying heaped in a shell hole, a large number of dead Japanese soldiers have yet to be buried. The Japanese regularly fought to the death on Saipan, perishing in pitched banzai charges or at the hands of American troops determined to capture the island despite the heavy resistance.

The attack up Death Valley did little better. Jarman ordered artillery hurled directly against Hell's Pocket and Mount Tapotchau, but the Army made no progress. Short of water, food, and ammunition, the exhausted troops pulled back, wounded men being carried by their buddies.

The Marines, however, did better. The 4th Marine Division finally occupied the whole of Kagman Peninsula, cutting the front down by 3,000 yards, while 2nd/8th Marines and 1st/29th Marines fought for Mount Tapotchau, the island's highest point. Pushing off at 7:30 AM, the leathernecks worked their way up to the top by scaling the cliffs. The Army had drawn off so many Japanese defenders to the sides of Tapotchau and Purple Heart Ridge that the Marines were able to reach the top almost unmolested.

Saito appreciated the situation as well, understanding the mess he was in. As he moved his tactical headquarters from Mount Tapotchau to a small cave one mile north of the lost pinnacle, he had only 1,200 able-bodied men and three tanks left of all Japanese Army frontline units.

On the 26th, the Japanese tried a predawn attack against the 1st/6th Marines. It failed.

The Americans continued their offensive. The Marines had turned the U-shaped salient into a death trap for the Japanese men defending it, and the 27th Infantry continued its bloody struggle for Purple Heart Ridge. The 106th Infantry sent in M7 self-propelled howitzers, Sherman tanks, and finally M-8 self-propelled artillery to chisel the Japanese out of their cliffs and caves. The 104th Field Artillery lobbed 360 rounds of 105mm shells into the Japanese positions, but the Japanese kept up heavy return fire. Seeing the 106th unable to gain ground, Jarman kept his promise and fired Colonel Ayers, appointing division chief of staff Colonel Albert K. Stebbins as regimental commander.

The Marines made small gains on Purple Heart Ridge, but mostly the leathernecks took a breather before resuming the assaults the next day

Far to the south, 500 Japanese troops, isolated by the 105th Infantry on Nafutan Point, lined up to make a midnight charge against the Americans. Captain Sasaki, commanding the 317th Independent Infantry Battalion and the other trapped forces, told his men, "The password for tonight will be 'Seven lives for one's country.'"

The Japanese infiltrated through the American lines and at 2:30 AM on the 27th hit Aslito Airfield and the emplacements of Marine artillery units. The Marine gunners fired their weapons at point-blank range or reached for their rifles and grenades, fending off the enemy. The 14th Marine Artillery Regiment killed 143 Japanese at the cost of 33 killed and wounded.

On the 27th, Jarman ordered his GIs to reorient their attack. He had only four battalions under his control—Holland Smith was giving direct orders to the rest—but Jarman was deter-

mined to clean up Death Valley with the 106th Infantry. The 3rd/106th attacked at 6:20 AM and came under immediate machine-gun fire, forcing the GIs to retreat. At 10:20, division ordered 25 minutes of artillery fire, but the artillery spotters had to hold their fire for half an hour trying to figure out where the American troops actually were to avoid hitting their own men.

Following the artillery barrage, the Americans attacked, and this time found a litter of enemy dead and not a shot fired. They moved through the terrain and up Hill King, finding a party of Japanese hiding in rocks and grass. The Americans threw grenades and pulled back to allow their mortars to destroy the position. Hill King was in American hands

The 3rd/106th kept moving through Death Valley, through cane fields, into the floor of the valley, pushing ahead despite heavy fire and shortages of ammunition and water. A platoon of light tanks was dispatched to provide the infantrymen with covering fire and supplies. Joined by the 165th, the 106th Infantry steadily attacked across Death Valley, getting into a severe hand-to-hand fight that left seven American casualties and 35 Japanese killed. The 1st/106th was assigned to mop up Hell's Pocket.

The 4th Marine Division continued its advance on the right backed by 1st/165th, 3rd/165th, and 1st/105th from the 27th Division. The 4th Marines moved ahead rapidly. The 2nd Marines made slower progress, reaching the outskirts of the capital, Garapan.

Meanwhile, Saito, Nagumo, the 31st Army's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Keiji Igeta, and other top Japanese officers convened to figure out what to do. It was decided simply to delay the Americans as long as possible.

Holland Smith was annoyed that the 105th had progressed so slowly against "a handful of Japs." He had a point—American leadership had been halting and slow, coordination poor, but the Japanese were in strong defensive terrain. The slow advance added to Holland Smith's gripes against the Army and Ralph Smith.

On the 28th, the 27th Infantry Division got its third new boss in a week, as Maj. Gen. George Griner was sent out from Hawaii to take over the division from Jarman. He inherited a division still struggling to finish off Purple Heart Ridge. As usual, the Japanese defenders did not open fire until the Americans were practically on top of them. Finally, however, Hell's Pocket was cleaned out

The Marines advanced slowly, battling terrain and Japanese defenses. American fighter bombers added to the horror with a misdirected airstrike that hit the 1st/2nd Marines with three rockets, causing 27 casualties.

The next day, June 29, the Americans continued to grind their way northward with the Marines driving on the flanks, isolating the Japanese defenses. The Marines advanced slowly into Garapan.

Under Griner, the 27th fought better. At 2 PM, three of the division's battalions jumped off to attack the northern end of Death Valley with Holland Smith himself watching from Mount Tapotchau. The Marine general was pleased and "expressly complimented" the division's performance to Griner.

On the last day of June, the 27th finished its bitter struggle to capture Death Valley and Purple Heart Ridge. "No one had any harder job to do," said Marine General Harry Schmidt

Fighting through the streets of Garapan, the principal city on the island of Saipan, American Marines search for enemy holdouts amid the rubble. The street fighting in Garapan was the first experience of its kind for American troops in the Pacific Theater.

later. Fighting raged on in Garapan. GIs assaulted Hill Uncle-Victor backed by heavy artillery fire, advancing 400 yards and finally clearing out Death Valley.

Sergeant Takeo Yamauchi was ordered to withdraw with his pals in single file amid pouring rain. American troops opened fire on them, knocking Yamauchi's glasses off his face. He and some buddies hid in a bunch of rocks, staying there until July 3.

The Americans now moved on the major town of Tanapag, finally looking down on it from the high ground. The 2nd Marine Division secured Garapan, finding Saipan's capital a mass of rubble from artillery fire.

On July 2 and 3, the Japanese continued to retreat in a piecemeal manner, while the Americans picked their way slowly and carefully behind them. The 24th Marines stormed Fourth of July Hill but were forced back each time by Japanese machine guns and mortars. The leathernecks pulled back and let the artillery take over, pounding the hill all night long. By 11:35 AM on Independence Day, Fourth of July Hill was in American hands

The American advance continued in a heavy downpour, which mired the tanks, but the 1st/165th reached the top of the last ridge over Flores Point seaplane base. In the Army's center, the 106th Infantry Regiment fought into the seaplane base joined by the 8th Marines.

Saito set up a new headquarters in the valley south of the village of Makunsha named Paradise Valley by the Americans and Hell Valley by the Japanese.

Holland Smith now had his plans ready for the third and final phase of the Saipan drive. The objectives were now Marpi Point and Marpi Airfield at the northern tip of Saipan.

With the island narrowing, he could not put three divisions in the line, so he pulled out the 2nd Marine Division to rest and prepare for the coming invasion of Tinian. The 4th Marine Division would advance on the right, 27th Infantry on the left. The Army assault would begin on July 5.

The attack went in at 1:30 PM with the usual

A Japanese soldier lies dead at the water's edge in Tanapag harbor on the island of Saipan, July 15, 1944. This soldier was among a number of Japanese troops that sought safety aboard ships in the harbor. Several of those vessels were attacked by U.S. aircraft and blaze in the distance. RIGHT: A U.S. Marine tries to communicate with a Japanese family he has discovered hiding on Saipan. The Japanese civilians had been warned of American brutality by their own propagandists. Tragically, many of them chose suicide rather than surrender to American forces.

opening barrage of artillery and air attack. The 27th Infantry attacked a canyon 50 yards wide and 400 yards long covered with undergrowth and trees. An ideal position, the Americans named it Hara-Kiri Gulch

Company K of the 165th hit Hara-Kiri Gulch first, doing so with tanks. Japanese troops darted out from ditches and slapped mines on the tanks, which disabled them. The Americans sent in more tanks and made repeated attacks, but the Japanese returned heavy fire.

Among the 200 to 300 defenders of Paradise Valley was Sergeant Takeo Yamauchi. He and two other soldiers stayed concealed there through July 8. He told the two men sharing his dugout that Japan was going to lose the war.

Saito told an assembly of officers that the final stand was at hand. That evening, the headquarters group ate the last of their food. Hirakushi asked if Igeta and Saito would participate in the final assault. Nagumo, who had said almost nothing during the whole retreat, finally spoke for the three officers: "We three will commit suicide."

At dawn on July 6, the Americans resumed the offensive. They were beginning to sense victory. Most of the island had been taken, and while Japanese defense remained fierce it was uncoordinated, splintered, and steadily weakening.

Company K of the 105th Infantry, under 1st Lt. Roger Peyre, joined by a platoon of light tanks under 1st Lt. Willis K. Dorey, attacked through a deep gully at 10:30 AM and came under heavy Japanese fire. Peyre's men moved out of a coconut grove into a counterattack down a cliff that was climaxed by a gigantic explosion that sent Japanese bodies and limbs in all directions

All day the Americans continued their drive. The 27th captured Tanapag, the last significant town on Saipan. That evening, the 1st and 2nd/105th deployed in an elongated semicircle. The 3rd/105th camped inland and several hundred yards south of the other two battalions. The GIs did not know it, but the artillery of 3rd/10th Marines were setting up behind them to bring Marpi Point under fire.

At Saito's cave, a sentry reported that an enemy tank was "peering over" the edge of the cliff above. Saito, conferring with Igeta and Nagumo, summoned Hirakushi and told the major that the three flag officers intended to commit suicide at 10 AM. Command of the final assault would devolve upon Colonel Eisuke Suzuki of the 135th Infantry Regiment.

When Hirakushi woke from a deep sleep, it was past sunset. He found his soldiers and sailors assembling outside, armed with rifles, swords, and even bamboo spears as officers sorted them into groups in the moonlight to the line of departure. More than 3,000 Japanese including civilians entered the coastal plains. Hirakushi heard Japanese troops shouting battle cries, and then rifle fire sputtered from a ridge signaling the attack. Hirakushi's men charged down the beach toward Tanapag without waiting for the command, and the major followed his men. As he charged, an explosion surrounded him. Then he passed out.

The Americans knew something was coming. A single prisoner had divulged the Japanese intent, saying that they were planning an all-out attack before dawn by everyone who could carry a rifle or spear.

The Japanese stormed over the two defending Army battalions, killing or wounding 650 GIs. Another group of Japanese troops stormed through a winding canyon and into the 3rd Battalion, but these Americans were too well emplaced and could not be dislodged.

As the Japanese attack flowed south, Marine

artillery deployed behind the GIs opened fire, knocking out a Japanese tank, but the enemy stormed through to the gunners' emplacements. The assault forced the Americans back into the streets of Tanapag. For the next four hours, the GIs, out of communication with their command posts, short of ammunition and water, with no means to evacuate wounded men, hung on against repeated Japanese attacks.

Smith responded with massive force. Navy cruisers sprinted to the scene and hurled shells at the beaches. An Army tank unit finally entered the fray. American artillery fired at anything that moved, driving American troops into the water. Griner sent his 165th Infantry Regiment to attack the Japanese on their right flank, into Hara-Kiri Gulch, driving the enemy out of the plain.

By midafternoon, the Japanese attack petered out against determined American defense and overwhelming firepower. Army and Navy medics passed through the many scattered bod-

ies and found surviving Japanese. On a U.S. Navy hospital ship, Major Hirakushi woke up, bandages on his head and shoulder, and his left hand handcuffed to a bed

As the Americans regained the ground lost in the initial Japanese assault, Holland Smith pulled the battered 27th Infantry Division out of the line and assigned the Marines to finish off the defenders. The 2nd Marine Division began mopping up, attacking on the 7th at 11:30 AM. The 6th Marines found a pocket of resistance of about 100 Japanese troops, who finally succumbed around 6:30 PM. All day long on the 8th and 9th, the 8th Marines investigated caves, finding disorganized Japanese groups dug in.

On July 9, the 4th Marine Division grabbed the ridge that overlooked Marpi Point and the cliff wall that fronted the sea. Saipan was secured.

At Marpi Point, a plateau some 833 feet above a shore of jagged coral rocks, 5,000 men, women, and children were trapped by the Marines. Fearing horrible deaths and eternal shame at the hands of the leathernecks, the Japanese civilians began killing themselves. Whole families waded and swam out to sea to drown themselves. The orgy of suicides went on through July 12.

Some Japanese men held out, among them Sergeant Takeo Yamauchi, whose dugout was ignored on the 8th and 9th. On July 10, American warships fired on his area, killing one of his men. Yamauchi suggested to his crew that they swim out to where the bow of a sunken ship was jutting out of the sea, but most of the men were no longer responding to rank and authority.

That evening, Yamauchi and some like-minded pals tried to swim to the ship, but the waves were too strong and most of the men turned back to shore. Just one sailor and Yamauchi were left in the water when an American machine gun opened fire. Yamauchi and his sailor colleague found a cave with a sergeant, several soldiers, and about 20 Japanese civilians, including women with crying babies. They huddled in the cave under a road. Late on the 13th, Yamauchi slipped out of the cave and made his way to a tree, planning to surrender at daybreak.

There he found four Japanese civilians—a middle-aged couple, a man a little older than himself, and a teenage girl. The middle-aged woman gave Yamauchi some porridge in an old tin can, his first meal in days. Then he just stood up and walked off through the jungle, the teenage girl and the couple following him. A Marine appeared in the jungle and ordered Yamauchi's party to halt and took them all prisoner.

Scattered fighting and roundups continued on Saipan for weeks—it was not until August 10 that the Americans could truly say the island was secure. By then, the Americans were moving on Tinian and Guam.

With the island of Saipan in hand, it was time for the Americans to tally the cost. More than 70,000 Americans took on 30,000 Japanese. The Americans had lost 3,225 dead, 13,061 wounded, and 326 missing. The Japanese losses were even greater. The Americans buried 23,811 Japanese defenders and took 1,780 prisoners, including 921 Japanese (17 of them officers), and 838 Koreans.

The loss of Saipan sent terrible shockwaves through Japan. The nation was already reeling from the naval debacle in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Privately, the Japanese leadership was also less bombastic. Admiral Shigeyoshi Miwa, describing the impact of the loss of the Marianas to Japan, put the situation succinctly to the emperor, saying: "Hell is upon us."

New Jersey-based author David Lippman is a frequent contributor to WWII History. *He also maintains a website dedicated to the daily events of World War II.*

With rifles and flamethrowers at the ready, U.S. Marines blast caves and bunkers on Saipan with explosive charges. Any enemy troops that survived the concussion and attempted to escape were quickly cut down.

MISSION TO MADAGASCAR

BY CLEVE C. BARKLEY

IN early 1942 things could have hardly looked bleaker for the Allies.

In Europe, Hitler's war machine had steamrolled across the entire continent and was now battling before the gates of Moscow. Across the Mediterranean, General Erwin Rommel's Panzerarmee Afrika seemed unstoppable as it prepared for the final push into Egypt and the coveted Suez Canal. And German U-boats prowled the North Atlantic, seemingly sinking ships at will, some within sight of the American mainland. In the Far East, Japanese conquests had spread across Asia and the Pacific Ocean like a blood-stained tide. It truly was a world war. But who remembers Madagascar?

After the fall of France in June 1940, many of her far-flung colonies were tethered to the new Vichy regime. Among them was Madagascar, the massive island off the southeastern coast of Africa, which remained an isolated backwater until March 1942, when Japanese forces had not only taken vital Singapore but also threatened British India by striking deep into Burma.

After the Allies observed Japanese naval demonstrations off the coast of Ceylon in the Indian Ocean, it was believed that further Japanese expansion was inevitable. Suddenly, Madagascar was elevated to priority status. Earlier the Vichy French had permitted the Japanese to enter Indochina. If the Japanese were granted similar access to Madagascar's deep-water harbor of Diego Suarez it was feared that enemy submarines and aircraft would commence wreaking havoc on the British convoys that passed the tropical island en route to the East by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

Such an occurrence would strangle the lifelines to British forces in Egypt and India and all but assure victory for the Axis powers. Having all the earmarks of a potential disaster, it was decided that Diego Suarez should not fall into enemy hands.

Dubbed Operation Ironclad, the British devised a plan that called for Diego Suarez to be taken by storm. The northern tip of Madagascar resembles an arrowhead with the eastern and western shorelines notched so severely as to create its neck. Deep within the eastern notch lies Diego Suarez with the port of Antsirane—population 30,000—to its south, separated by a bay. Knowing that the harbor's entrance was narrow and heavily defended, it was decided that the landings would take place on the northwestern coast, followed by a rapid march eastward to take both towns from the rear. Speed and stealth were imperative.

Overall command of the operation was given to Rear Admiral Edward N. Syfret, Royal Navy, whose task force would steam down the West African coast to Durban, South Africa, before proceeding to Madagascar. With the battleship HMS *Ramillies* as flagship, the fleet comprised a number of cruisers, destroyers, and lesser warships along with the aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious*, all escorting an assortment of transports. An additional carrier, HMS *Indomitable* of the Eastern Fleet, would rendezvous as they neared their target.

The land element, Force 121, had departed Britain via convoy on March 23 and joined Syfret at Freetown, Sierra Leone. Commanded by Maj. Gen. Robert Sturges, Royal Marines, its primary component was Brigadier Francis Festing's 29th Independent Brigade, which had received extensive training in amphibious operations while in Britain. The 29th would be augmented by No. 5 Commando and B Special Service Squadron, an armored formation consisting six Valentine tanks and six Tetrarch light tanks, each armed with a two-pounder gun and one Besa machine gun. The crewmen, all volunteers, had been cross-trained in commando tactics. Also attached was 455 Light

Imperial War Collection

In this photo taken during the progress of the campaign to secure Madagascar from Vichy French forces, British Commonwealth soldiers rush ashore on the large island in the autumn of 1942. The fight for control of Madagascar was sharp and costly as the British sought to secure it from possible Japanese occupation.

Battery, consisting of two 25-pounder guns and four 3.7-inch light howitzers.

Realizing this force alone would be greatly challenged by the sheer scope of the operation, Sturges managed to have the 13th and 17th Brigades of the India-bound 5th Division attached, with provision that each be returned to its parent organization upon completion of the mission. In all, Sturges commanded about 15,000 men.

The Vichy French, administered by Governor General Armand Annet, believed that any attempt to seize Diego Suarez could only come from the more accessible east, so they planned their defenses accordingly. With the harbor entrance being a mere slit cut between towering cliffs, the French wisely placed five coastal batteries—some mounting massive 330mm guns—on the Orangea Peninsula, which formed the strait's southern palisade.

Posted near the port of Antsirane was Colonel Rouves's 2nd Mixed Regiment comprised of French colonials, Senegalese Tirailleurs, and Malagasy soldiers, with several companies billeted at Diego Suarez across the bay. While the Malagasy were of dubious quality, the colonials and Senegalese were top notch with the latter being ranked among the most ruthless killers in the world. There were also several naval vessels and a small air contingent.

Straddling a narrow isthmus a couple thousand yards below Antsirane was a string of intricate trench works studded with pillboxes, each enjoying clear fields of fire. Called the Joffre Line, it was a strong series of defensive fortifications. The flanks were anchored by Fort

Caimans to the west and Fort Bellevue to the east with heavily foliaged terrain falling sharply from each to a swampy mangrove-lined shore, making any flanking maneuver extremely hazardous. Two thousand yards long, it was a daunting position.

Roughly 20 miles due west, the coast was so congested by treacherous reefs and rocky outcroppings that any invasion from that direction was deemed foolhardy at best and virtually impossible by night. Nonetheless, all approaches had been heavily mined. Only two bays held suitable landing beaches—Courrier Bay to the north and smaller Ambararata Bay about seven miles to its south—both guarded by a battery of 138mm guns perched atop a 50-foot cliff overlooking Courrier. It was believed that this battery, known as Coastal Defense Battery Seven, would be sufficient to delay any incursion long enough to allow Vichy forces to man the Joffre Line. Farther inland a stone observation tower—bearing the unlikely name of Windsor Castle—kept vigil from a sheer elevation north of Courrier. Only one company safeguarded these positions. All told, the forces defending Antsirane numbered less than 4,000.

Departing Durban on April 28, 1942, Admiral Syfret's task force arrived off the northwestern shore of Madagascar late on May 4. The plan called for Lt. Col. William Sanguinetti's No. 5 Commando and Company B, 2nd Battalion East Lancashire Regiment to land at Courrier Bay and knock out Coastal Defense Battery Seven as well as another suspected emplacement before proceeding cross-country via the Andrakaka Peninsula to occupy Diego Suarez itself. Meanwhile Brigadier Festing's 29th Independent Brigade would conduct a 21-mile march inland from Ambararata Bay to take the port city of Antsirane from the south. It was hoped that the entire operation would be swift and trouble free.

In the wee hours of May 5, minesweepers cleared channels for the troopships while the cruiser *Devonshire* stood by, ready to respond to the first inkling of opposition. At 2:30 AM, the landing craft holding No. 5 Commando commenced the 10-mile journey to Red Beach, nestled on the northern shore of Courrier Bay. They had hardly pulled away from their mother ship, it seemed, than two shattering explosions rent the night within 15 minutes of each other—the minesweeper *Romney* had accidentally detonated two mines while clearing the bay. Aboard *Ramillies*, Admiral Syfret and General Sturges grimaced, fearing that the element of surprise had surely been lost. The commotion did not go unnoticed in the assault boats either, where officers snarled, "Fix bayonets!" in anticipation of a hot reception.

Tasked with eliminating Coastal Battery Seven, three troops hit Red Beach North at 4:30 AM, expecting the worst, but not a shot was fired. To their good fortune, *Romney*'s mishap had not betrayed their approach. Immediately, commandos scaled a 50-foot escarpment and surrounded the battery only to discover that the guns were completely unattended. Hardly believing their good fortune, they quickly disabled the guns then closed in on some nearby barracks. Dawn was just breaking as they peeked inside, and they were thrilled to discover that the entire garrison was fast asleep. Obviously, the French clung to the belief that a nighttime invasion from the west was impossible. Now they would pay for their assumption.

The commandos burst in brandishing weapons and shouting loudly, startling the drowsy inhabitants. The majority were Malagasy, most of whom gave up without a fight. A few French officers and NCOs reacted swiftly and launched a vicious counterattack. One Frenchman lunged with his bayonet and skewered a commando's arm. Another charged only to be cut down by a curt burst from a Thompson submachine gun, while Lieutenant "Dopey" Rose all but blew the head off a third with a single slug from his Colt .45 pistol. That settled things. Realizing that opposition was futile, the Frenchmen dropped their weapons and threw up their hands.

Then someone noticed that a white flag had been hoisted above the observation tower on precipitous Windsor Castle, farther uphill. Captain John "Chips" Heron was ordered to bring these soldiers in. As his patrol neared the crest a number of Senegalese sprung from a trench with hands held high, but just as Heron stepped forward several grenades arched from behind the supposedly surrendering soldiers and tumbled downhill. Commandos scattered.

The bombs exploded, and Heron groaned as fragments perforated his legs and buttocks. Enraged by such treachery, his men rushed the Senegalese and killed them all. Still conscious, Heron ordered his command to fall back, and once they were safely down Navy gunners and fleet aircraft pounded the heights until no more activity was seen.

While all this occurred, two other troops had landed at Red Beach South with the mission of eliminating the suspected second battery. Finding the intelligence erroneous, these men marched north to link with their comrades at the appointed rendezvous. Joined by the attached company of 2nd East Lancashire, Sanguinetti's command, some 700 strong, commenced its eight-mile trek across the Andrakaka Peninsula to Diego Suarez.

Out at sea, Admiral Syfret and General Sturges sighed with relief upon receiving word of the commando success. With Coastal Battery Seven no longer a threat, Festing's 29th Independent Brigade could now proceed unmolested to Ambararata Bay.

First in were the 1st Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers at Green Beach cupped to the south and 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which swarmed over White Beach a little farther north, both on time and without opposition. Only at Blue Beach, situated on a spit of land two miles above White, was there any semblance of resistance when a machine gun took the boats of 2nd Battalion East Lancashire Regiment under fire. The gun was quickly silenced by a company of Welsh Fusiliers marching from the south. By 6:20 AM, 2,300 troops were ashore.

While the west coast landings were under way, the light cruiser HMS *Hermione* was staging a lively demonstration off the east coast, firing smoke and star shells in the vicinity of Amodivahibe Bay, which the French believed to be the only suitable site for amphibious operations. At daybreak dummy parachutists floated onto the Orangea Peninsula while the Fleet Air Arm pounced on French ships anchored at Diego Suarez, sinking or damaging all but the gunboat *D'Entrecasteaux*. Other planes crippled the Vichy air force at Arrachart airfield, five miles south of Antsirane. Special Operations Executive agent Percy Mayer had managed to sever telephone lines between Windsor Castle and Antsirane, denying the French vital communications during the actual invasion. Combined, all these actions reinforced the French belief that an invasion could only come from the east.

Back at Ambararata Bay, Brigadier Festing received the troubling report that Green and White Beaches were incapable of supporting heavy vehicles, so the landing craft ferrying his artillery and tanks were being diverted to the much firmer Blue. It was a delay he could hardly afford, for speed was of the essence. Not willing to wait, he ordered his infantry to proceed without them. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers took the lead with the balance of the brigade trailing. Antsirane lay 21 hot and dusty miles to the east

The march quickly evolved into a trial of endurance. The heat became insufferable as the men plodded through scrub and craggy stone, longing for relief but receiving none. Several miles in a number of Bren gun carriers and motorcycle scouts overtook them, raising clouds of choking dust as they claimed the lead.

At midmorning an automobile carrying a French naval officer and three sailors blundered into the vanguard and were taken prisoner. Brigadier Festing presented them a letter addressed to Governor General Annet stating the long-held British desire that the Vichy capitulate and join the Allied cause, thereby avoiding further bloodshed. Charged with its delivery, the rattled Frenchmen were released and the arduous march resumed.

By 11 AM, the Bren carriers had bypassed the town of Anamakia and were approaching a rocky ridge, which rudimentary maps indicated was only passable through a boulder-strewn saddle called the Col de Bonne Nouvelle. The scouts were elated, knowing that just beyond the pass the road swung abruptly north toward their goal of Antsirane, barely three miles farther. But their joy was short lived.

Suddenly, the boulders, bordering grasslands, and neighboring hillocks exploded with machine-gun and rifle fire. Vehicles veered left and right. Brigadier Festing, who had joined the vanguard in his personal carrier, was obliged to help guide his vehicle to shelter after the first burst shattered his driver's hand.

No sooner had the carriers taken cover than two Valentine tanks trailed by one of the lighter Tetrarchs clattered onto the scene. Festing battered the lead tank's turret with his ever present walking stick, and up popped Major Jocelin Simon. Festing promptly ordered Simon to enter the gap and clear out the menacing machine guns. The major's hatch clanged shut, and away he went.

Bullets clattered against iron hulls as the tanks entered the trough and used their two-pounders with telling effect. At one point 10 Senegalese broke from cover only to be mowed down by the lead Valentine's machine gun. Other tanks blasted pillboxes or targeted enemy trenches, and before long the gunfire slackened, then died. Realizing that further maneuver in the rugged terrain was impossible, Simon ordered his command to push on and out to the other side. Soon after, two more Tetrarchs arrived and chased after the column as it waddled toward Antsirane.

Led by Lieutenant Whitaker's Valentine, Simon's juggernaut continued single file down the solitary road, confident they had accomplished their mission. Roughly 3,000 yards farther, Whitaker's tank negotiated a blind turn only to come face to face with a truckload of Senegalese racing to the aid of their comrades at the pass. Startled, Whitaker's gunner riddled the vehicle with his Besa, killing or wounding the lot. The next moment Whitaker's Valentine shuddered, nailed by a solid-shot armor-piercing round. A track unraveled. A second shot racked the turret. Hatches swung open, and two men bailed, leaving the driver slumped in his seat, dead. As the survivors scrambled for cover, a machine gun bowled the gunner, prompting Whitaker to pivot mid-stride to help him to shelter.

Simon's Valentine surged forward, firing as it went, but it too was hit, with the concussion knocking the driver senseless. Without guidance the tank advanced of its own accord. In rapid succession another round struck a driving sprocket, while a third jammed the turret. His tank now useless, Simon ordered the crew to bail from the still moving vehicle. Simon and his gunner leaped clear, but to their horror their stunned driver tumbled directly in front of a churning tread and was horribly mutilated. Crewless, the tank clattered on until immobilized by boulders.

Both Valentines were now out of action. The three Tetrarchs had hardly commenced laying covering fire for their dismounted comrades than two were hit and burst into flames. In the first, Corporal Watkins was killed. His severely burned mates managed to pull themselves free. The gunner and driver of the second Tetrarch were wounded, but their commander, Lieutenant Carlisle, was able to extract the driver and drag him to cover before darting back to rescue the gunner. His crew now safe, Carlisle once again braved shot and shell to remove a Bren gun from his broiling hulk before rejoining his comrades in the bush.

It was a disaster. Simon's command had run headlong into the Joffre Line. Somehow aerial reconnaissance had overlooked the entire strongpoint, and its presence came as a complete surprise. Shocked, Simon raced to the lone surviving Tetrarch and ordered Lieutenant Astles to rush back to brigade to apprise Festing of its existence. Astles's tank pivoted and scurried away

The scene among the damaged and burning tanks quickly revealed Simon's last stand. He commanded only eight men, five of whom were wounded. Having been trained in commando tactics, his men were not about to give up. Survivors scavenged the wreckage for additional weapons and secured a second Bren gun as well as a Thompson submachine gun. Simon formed a defensive perimeter, tended his wounded, and waited for rescue.

The French had other ideas. At once Senegalese Tirailleurs launched a spirited bayonet attack but were driven back by heavy fire. But the Africans were brave soldiers and charged twice more. During the third rush the gallant Whitaker was killed in hand-to-hand combat, most likely gutted by a bayonet. By then the Englishmen had exhausted practically all their ammunition, so Simon wisely surrendered his tiny command. Eight survivors were taken captive, including the five wounded. It was 3:45 PM.

While all this occurred, Brigadier Festing remained stymied before the Col de Bonne Nouvelle. Initially, he had ordered Lt. Col. Hugh Stockwell's 2nd Battalion Royal Welsh

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British commandos cling to the sides of a motor sailer as they prepare to assault objectives on Madagascar at the start of Operation Ironclad.

Fusiliers to clear the heights in conjunction with Simon's original sortie, but the tanks had moved on. That was a mistake.

Two companies advanced with fixed bayonets, supported by a pair of light howitzers of 455 Battery. The French were waiting. At once heavy machine-gun and rifle fire swept the field, and men began to fall. Apparently, after Simon's tanks had departed the Tirailleurs simply closed ranks and braced for the next assault. Now Welshmen were dying in the sun-scorched scrub. Officers took control and men rushed forward—fire and movement—getting so close that enemy riflemen had little trouble picking their targets.

A captain was killed at nearly point-blank range then was promptly avenged by his pistol-wielding lieutenant. Bayonets flashed, and by 3 PM the ridge was in British hands—but not without cost. Three officers and many others had been killed with numerous wounded. Drained by debilitating heat, the strenuous march, and the strain of battle, Welshmen collapsed among the boulders while Lt. Col. J.F. Armstrong's 1st Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers resumed the advance. By then, the balance of B Special Service Squadron, led by Captain Peter Palmer, had arrived, minus one Tetrarch abandoned at the beach due to electrical problems.

The skirmish at the Col de Bonne Nouvelle had clearly been unexpected. What Brigadier Festing did not know was that the Vichy naval officer he had released earlier had, instead of urging his commanders' surrender, sounded the alarm and the French quickly forwarded reinforcements piecemeal to hold the pass until the Joffre Line could be fully manned. Having accomplished their mission, the delaying force withdrew.

Throughout the action Festing had been acutely aware of an intense exchange of gunfire farther beyond the ridge and assumed that Simon's tanks were clearing the way to Antsirane. But just as the Welshmen had achieved success Lieutenant Astles's Tetrarch came tearing from the east at top speed with a Vichy motorcycle and sidecar trailing beneath the muzzle of a crewman's machine gun—the only survivors of yet another encounter with Vichy reinforcements motoring forward. Festing listened intently to Astles's disturbing report. Anxious to take Antsirane before dark, the brigadier ordered Captain Palmer's freshly arrived tanks to proceed posthaste to reconnoiter the heretofore unknown enemy defenses. Armstrong's Scots Fusiliers would follow as rapidly as possible. It was midafternoon.

Four Valentines and three Tetrarchs thundered down the road, one being that of the indomitable Astles. They had barely commenced their reconnaissance when shells began bursting all about. Not wanting to repeat Simon's folly, Palmer ordered his column to break right into the tall scrub of a nearby cane plantation, hoping to find good hull-down positions from which they could observe the front. Fully manned, the Joffre Line remained invisible, shrouded by vegetation. As a consequence, Palmer ordered Sgt. Maj. Allen's Valentine to follow his own in an attempt to draw fire. It worked far too well.

No sooner had the pair exposed themselves than both were hit. A track of Allen's tank snapped and snaked off its sprocket. Then another round clanged off the turret, wounding all inside while rendering their gun inoperable. Their vehicle useless, Allen ordered everyone out. Only two staggered safely away

Palmer's crew fared no better. Several solid hits wounded him and his driver but left the gunner intact. They too bailed to join Allen's men, but just then Palmer noticed Allen's driver flailing helplessly in his hatch and backtracked to pull him free. Now clear, both limped away only to vanish in the blinding flash of a shattering explosion.

By then the others had located the source of their comrades' demise and cut loose with their two-pounders, sending shell after shell into a low ridge some 1,800 yards distant and to the right. It was Fort Bellevue, the sturdy redoubt that anchored the enemy's eastern flank. Vichy gunners responded with a vengeance, and as twilight loomed the armor fell back. It was

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ABOVE: Located in the western Indian Ocean off the coast of East Africa, Madagascar was strategically located near British and Commonwealth interests in the region. LEFT: British operations on Madagascar encountered stiff resistance from the Vichy French, including a series of reinforced strongpoints that were assaulted during a period of heavy fighting.

barely 6 PM. In the course of three short encounters, B Special Service Squadron had lost half its tank strength as well as 17 of its 45 men, six of them killed.

Also retiring were elements of the Scots Fusiliers, who had faced the same galling fire after launching a minor attack on the left. For the British, the day ended with flagging spirits; for the French, burgeoning confidence.

The only bright spot was the achievements of William Sanguinett's command, which, after striking out from Windsor Castle, had trekked the Andrakaka Peninsula without incident until coming upon a stubborn roadblock halfway through. A sharp firefight dislodged the defenders who left 50 wounded behind, and the march resumed nearly unimpeded. By midafternoon the commandos were in possession of Diego Suarez.

But Brigadier Festing knew nothing of this. Meanwhile, he had advanced his headquarters to a small hotel in the village of La Scama, well within sniper range. It was a bold move, but Festing, revered as "Frontline Frankie," wanted to personally observe the action. By then Lt. Col. J.R. Thatcher's 2nd Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment had joined Armstrong's 1st Battalion, Scots Fusiliers at the front while the exhausted Welshmen dodged bullets at brigade headquarters. Festing's last battalion, Lt. Col. Michael West's 2nd Battalion, South Lancashire Regiment was still tramping from the beaches but was expected to arrive before dark.

Festing scrutinized the Joffre Line about 1,200 yards to his front, noting its perfect placement on a gently rising ridge that spanned an isthmus separating two bays. He could judge its width as perhaps 2,000 yards and had already felt the sting of its weapons but had yet to test the strength of its well-concealed trenches and fortifications that commanded open, slightly undulating terrain. Acknowledging its advantages, Festing made preparations for an all-out attack, confident he would be in Antsirane by the next day.

Festing's plan called for West's South Lancashires to penetrate the mangrove of the eastern shore to outflank and attack Fort Bellevue from the rear just as two other battalions launched frontal assaults at dawn. Preliminary air strikes were to bomb the Vichy line while four 3.7-inch howitzers and two 25-pounders of 455 Battery provided support. West's battalion would jump off at 2 AM to allow time to get into place.

Divided into three columns, West's 500-strong command departed on schedule and was quickly swallowed by the fetid, mosquito-plagued swamp. In time, the combination of darkness and tangled vegetation so hampered progress that each column became disjointed, then splintered. To make matters worse, every wireless set malfunctioned and communications with brigade headquarters were lost. West realized he would never be able to maintain his projected timetable.

Back at the front, the assault companies of the 1st Battalion, Scots Fusiliers on the right and the 2nd Battalion, East Lancashire on the left slipped forward under darkness in preparation for the attack. Some managed to bypass an unfinished antitank ditch and hunkered uneasily several hundred yards before the enemy trenches.

At precisely 5 AM, fleet aircraft gave the Joffre Line a severe drubbing but did little damage. Thirty minutes later the infantry rose and traversed the open ground as swiftly as possible until staggered by a perfect storm of iron and steel. Shrapnel cascaded with astonishing regularity as the French 75mm guns flaunted their reputation for rapid, accurate fire while machine guns flailed the plain. And then the mortar shells began to fall.

The assault companies were being shot to pieces, trapped between the strong defensive positions to their front and the antitank ditches to their rear. Unable to advance, dozens of Scots and Englishmen sought shelter in the depths of the tank traps. Those caught in the open scampered for shell holes or depressions where many remained until dark. The antitank ditches were nearly seven feet deep with steep banks, and it became obvious that they too were death traps. To stay invited bombardment by mortars, while every attempt to escape over the rear wall was met with murderous gunfire.

Disaster compounded disaster. The six guns of 455 Battery barked in continuous support until counterbattery fire struck, wounding many, forcing the guns to retire. A mortar detachment of the Scots Fusiliers worked to within a couple hundred yards of their comrades trapped at the front and popped shell after shell into the French line. After exhausting much of their ammunition, 2nd Lieutenant Powrie was killed while attempting to bring up additional rounds

One company of East Lancashires advanced over the barren plain and was eviscerated by machine guns and 75s. In Lieutenant Wood's platoon, one shell took out five men at once, one severely when shrapnel struck a grenade that exploded while still in its pouch. Five of eight of their supporting Bren carriers were knocked out one after another, compelling the final three to pull back. The cry, "Stretcher bearer!" rang out all across the front. Within an hour of its commencement, the attack was cancelled.

Less than half the men returned to their original lines. Many were stranded in the field or squatted in the tank ditches, unable to move. How many were unscathed was anyone's guess. To add to the confusion the dry scrub had been ignited by the fierce artillery exchange and now brushfires swept the plain, forcing many Britons into ignominious flight. Mortified officers corralled the culprits and led them back to

AP Photo

Vichy French forces on Madagascar included both French soldiers and colonial troops from Senegal and other locations. In this photo, colonial soldiers fire a canon under the watchful eye of a French officer in 1942.

the front once the fires had passed. It was not a glorious day for the British Army.

Still, there were episodes of British gallantry. After Corporal Bell's section of Scots Fusiliers had scrambled into an antitank ditch, a grenade tumbled in and settled between him and Fusilier Bunyan. Bunyan shouted, "Look out, boys!" as he grabbed the bomb, just in time to absorb its fatal blast, saving his mates.

Second Lieutenant Peter Reynier of the same battalion also displayed exemplary courage when his platoon was pinned down by heavy machine-gun fire emanating from a distant pillbox. Clutching several grenades, Reynier bellied to within 60 feet of the still hammering gun when a lookout spotted him and opened fire. The first round shattered the lieutenant's jaw. Reynier sprang up and charged. Another bullet ripped his left arm, but not before his right reared back to hurl a grenade directly into a firing slit.

Unknown to Reynier, each aperture had been screened with wire mesh to prevent just such an event and the bomb came bounding back with Reynier receiving much of the blast. Bleeding profusely, the lieutenant lay unattended until finally taken captive.

Brigadier Festing fumed as his plan unraveled. Much of his brigade lay scattered between La Scama and the Joffre Line with little hope of regaining British lines. The balance had returned battered and demoralized. The exact location of the enemy's fortifications still remained a mystery, and he had no idea what had happened to Colonel West's flanking maneuver. Due to the malfunction of the 2nd South Lancashires' radios, Festing presumed the entire command had been killed or captured—another devastating blow.

At 7 AM, General Sturges stormed into Festing's headquarters and was not pleased. After surveying the damages he decided a night assault by Brigadier G.W.B. Tarleton's fresh 17th Brigade, supported by Festing's decimated command, would carry the works. Tarleton's brigade had just completed landing but was expected to arrive by evening. As an added measure Sturges planned for Sanguinetti's commandos to make a diversionary cross-bay assault, providing they could find boats at Diego Suarez. After issuing the appropriate orders, Sturges rushed back to confer with Admiral Syfret regarding his plan. While retracing his route he was encouraged by the sight of Tarleton's battalions marching confidently forward as bagpipers lent a lively tune.

That afternoon Festing's headquarters was electrified when Colonel West of the lost South Lancashire battalion came swaggering in with a Thompson submachine gun tucked beneath an arm. His adoring entourage boasted that their swashbuckling commander had personally accounted for as many as 35 Vichy in the course of their adventure. West's report offered a glimmer of hope. While most of Festing's men had not completed their mission—in fact the entire left wing had been stopped short of Fort Bellevue—others had persevered.

Prior to his battalion's departure West had anticipated its disintegration in the dark and inhospitable swamp and had issued a precautionary order that if separated his subordinates were to form guerrilla parties and carry on, striking targets of opportunity at their discretion. That is exactly what happened. Once organization had collapsed, West ordered Major Northcott to gather those he could to carry out the provisional order while he returned to advise headquarters of the situation. West's report proved to be the only good news of an otherwise dismal day. Festing hoped that Northcott's forlorn hope would prove beneficial to the operation's outcome.

Beneficial it was. Upon clearing the mangrove, Major Northcott organized small raiding parties that went to work with boundless zeal. Telephone lines were cut. One group attacked a Vichy artillery train and scattered the battery's pack animals. Others sniped at the Joffre Line from the rear while vehicles rushing to and from the front were ambushed by jubilant Britons. Northcott's raiders were causing a great deal of anxiety among the French.

Meanwhile, Sturges was again aboard *Ramillies*, where he disclosed his plan to Admiral Syfret, proposing a revision that required naval assistance. If a fast destroyer could round Cape Amber and force the harbor entrance, a contingent of Royal Marines could land at Antsirane simultaneous to Sanguinetti's diversionary assault, thereby drawing forces from the Joffre Line. It was a risky proposition considering the harbor's narrow entrance and strong defenses, but Syfret agreed although he only gave the venture a minimal chance of success. At once 50 marines were transferred from *Ramillies* to the destroyer HMS *Anthony*, which promptly departed to cover the 120 miles to Antsirane. Zero Hour was set at 8:30 PM.

While the commanders schemed, two more problems arose. First, the LST *Bachaquero*, carrying a dozen desperately needed 25-pounders of 9th Field Regiment, was unable to beach at Ambararata Bay on D-day and was diverted north to Courrier, arriving late that afternoon. Eventually one battery was muscled ashore. In the waning light, the men could not find the Antsirane road and were rerouted to Diego Suarez with orders to bombard the Joffre Line from the rear. Arriving the following day, the gunners were shelled by the elusive gunboat *D'Entrecasteaux*, which was eventually sunk with the assistance of naval gunnery and fleet aircraft. Now free from harassment, the gunners resumed their mission, but lacking proper

Rue des Archives / The Granger Collection, NY

Vichy French officials did not capitulate on the island of Madagascar until November 1942, the same month the Allied landings during Operation Torch were conducted in North Africa. Here, British troops land at Diego Suarez during the effort to gain control of the port city's facilities.

observation fired blindly across the bay.

The other setback came when No. 5 Commando failed to secure boats to launch their diversionary attack from Diego Suarez. Unable to contribute to the final assault, they remained idle on the northern shore.

Back at La Scama, darkness had fallen. The scouring fires had passed. Smudge-faced soldiers nursed billy pots as they brewed their evening tea and stared slack-jawed into the cheerless night. Many comrades remained trapped in no-man's land, where patrols probed the smoldering plain for fissures in the Joffre Line but found none. Meanwhile, Brigadier Tarleton's 17th Brigade staggered in, having endured stifling heat, brush fires, and sporadic sniping as they trudged the sandy track.

By then General Sturges's attack orders had arrived at the appropriate brigade headquarters. Tarleton decided to lead with Lt. Col. John W. Hinchcliffe's 2nd Battalion, The Northamptonshire Regiment on the right while Lt. Col. George Rawstorne's understrength 6th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders advanced to their left, assisted by an attached company of the 2nd Welsh Fusiliers. Lt. Col. I.D. Macinnes's 2nd Battalion Scots Fusiliers, sister battalion of Armstrong's decimated 1st Battalion, would follow.

The assault would be supported by what remained of Festing's 29th Brigade with orders to be in Antsirane by daybreak. Thankfully, an additional battery of 25-pounders was now in action, having been offloaded piecemeal from transports at Blue Beach and rushed to the front.

At 8:30 PM, the Seaforths and Northamptons advanced with leveled bayonets. The impetus of the attack was directed at the enemy's center between Forts Caimans and Bellevue, using the central road as a guide. Having witnessed the carnage of the previous attacks, no one held misconceptions of an easy victory, but with spirits bolstered by a liberal rum ration and the issuance of stimulating Benzedrine tablets, no one faltered either.

The British reached halfway across without a shot being fired. The fortunes of war had finally turned in their favor, partly due to the darkness, but also to a sense of overconfidence among the defenders, whose officers had convinced them that they were winning. As a result, many Vichy soldiers had dropped their guard, believing the enemy would not strike again until daylight.

As the khaki line drew nearer, a vigilant African sounded the alarm. Senegalese and Malagasy soldiers sprang to arms and opened fire, but too late. Their Scots blood up, the Seaforths roared their war cry, "Caber Feidh!" as they leaped into the trenches and went to work with the bayonet. One sergeant came face to face with an enraged Senegalese and lunged with such force that his bayonet ran clear through him.

Bren gunners released a galling fire, ripping men apart at point-blank range, but the Africans responded with unrestrained savagery. Blades flashed. Shots rang out. One highlander staggered away, his arm a bloody stump. African and Briton grappled in intimate desperation and rolled upon the earthen floor. A shower of grenades added to the confusion while Vichy mortar bombs plunked steadily among attacker and defender alike.

In the center, a company of Malagasy led by Commander Fontaine struggled to hold the line, but when Fontaine fell mortally wounded his ill-trained troops lost all motivation and abandoned their positions as the British stormed through. Once breached, the line began to crumble, and by 11 PM all assault elements had reached their designated objectives some 1,800 yards beyond the trenches. Signal flares arched into the darkness to announce both battalions' success. They had breached the Joffre Line. Immediately, Tarleton shoved his reserves through the gap followed by Festing's battered brigade. Antsirane was now but a short march away.

While the Seaforths and Northamptons were engaged at the Joffre Line, HMS *Anthony* had achieved the near impossible. Shortly after 8 PM she plowed full speed through the narrow strait, provoking the wrath of the protective batteries. Shells splashed to the fore, aft, starboard, and port as Anthony pressed on with all guns blazing. A garish beam lashed from the shore and fastened onto *Anthony* with unshakable tenacity until extinguished by the second salvo from HMS *Devonshire,* which had joined *Hermione* as offshore support. Once again cloaked in darkness, *Anthony* raced for Antsirane, nearly eight miles away.

Within 20 minutes she reached her destination. Lt. Cmdr. John Hodges, *Anthony*'s skipper, wanted to land his marines on Antsirane's docks, now shrouded by smoke and flame from earlier airstrikes. As his vessel edged closer the shoreline erupted with raucous gunfire. Navy gunners leveled their pompoms and 20mm automatic Oerlikons and unleashed a devastating response until the incoming fire ceased.

Blinded by billowing smoke, *Anthony* came in hard but missed the quay, then missed again when strong winds intervened. Unshaken, Hodges simply threw *Anthony*'s engines into reverse and whipped her stern athwart and kept her pressed firmly against the jetty until all 50 marines had scrambled over her side. But even this maneuver was not without peril. Again machine guns raked the deck while a 75mm gun was shouldered into place and opened fire. Sailors ducked, believing in miracles as the round shrieked harmlessly overhead. A second shot was denied when marines rushed the gun and scattered its crew into the night.

Her duty done, *Anthony* shoved off and once more ran the gauntlet before regaining the open

Continued on page 73

Imperial War Museum

The Royal Navy battleship HMS *Ramillies* sails into French Bay harbor near the city of Diego Suarez as Operation Ironclad comes to a close. The Royal Navy contributed firepower to British land operations during the campaign to secure Madagascar.

COURAGE AND SELFLESSNESS SAVED FELLOW AIRMEN DURING AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE MISSION TO BREMEN AND LATER ON A RUN TO BERLIN.

The Last Flight of NELSON KING

THE *NELSON KING*, a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber, was en route to Berlin on March 6, 1944, when it flew into a whirlwind of Luftwaffe fighters. It was fighting its way through the attack when the wing of a Messerschmitt Me 109 fighter ripped through the huge square "D" on the bomber's tailfin.

Tail gunner Lieutenant Joe Greasamar was knocked out cold by the impact above his head. He woke up lying flat on his back with a view of the sky above. He thought he was falling but soon realized he was still in the bomber. When he got his senses about him, he resumed manning his guns. He did not know that a German fighter had almost torn his bomber in two.

The crew of the bomber's last mission had begun at Thorpe Abbotts, a hamlet in England about 90 miles north of London, home for over 3,500 Allied airmen and support personnel from 1943 to 1945, and involves the heroism of Nelson King during an earlier run to Bremen, Germany. Thorpe Abbotts was the headquarters of the B-17s of the "Bloody One Hundredth," the known as the 100th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force. At that time, one in seven residents of Thorpe Abbotts and surrounding Suffolk County was an American.

The *Nelson King* crew was led by pilot Lieutenant Frank Laurel, who until joining the service had been the youngest member of the

[illegible] Berlin on March 4, 1944.

BY KEITH BUCHANAN

New York Stock Exchange. Other crew [illegible] included co-pilot 2nd Lt. Emanuel "Joe" Greasaman [illegible] Ohio rainbow and part-time [illegible] was [illegible] Ball turret gunner Sergeant Murray Schrier had worked [illegible] hotel in New York, while top turret gunner Sergeant Dewey Thompson was from North Carolina. Sergeant Bill Heathman from Warren, Ohio, was the right waist gunner, and Sergeant Nelson King, an oversized rainbow from Kansas, was the radio operator.

At that time, the bomber had no nickname or logo painted on the nose. That would come later.

The "Bloody One Hundredth" was a most apt sobriquet for this group of airmen. Fewer than one in four could expect to complete his tour of duty in a B-17, or that time 25 missions. Two-thirds of the men could expect to die in combat or be captured. An additional 1[illegible] percent would either be wounded seriously, suffer a mental breakdown, or perish in an air accident over Allied soil.

On the cold Monday morning of their ninth mission, the crew arose with the normal 1:30 wake-up call and prepared for the flight to Bremen to drop their [illegible],800 pounds of ordnance. The bombing run was made with few problems, a milk run at the crew [illegible]. The return trip to England was what made it unusual.

The sky was overcast and after releasing the

Painting © Robert Bailey

bombs, the entire bomber group climbed up to 35,000 feet, both to get clear of clouds and to avoid the Luftwaffe. Sergeant Schrier recalled that after they finally stopped climbing and the sky was no longer blue, but black, the temperature had fallen to 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Without a pressurized cabin, the temperature was miserable for the crew.

Schrier watched for fighters, feeling comfortable that there were none at this altitude. Crammed into the ball turret, Schrier could not wear a parachute, and at five feet, nine inches he was too tall to wear his boots, but his three pairs of insulated socks provided sufficient warmth for his feet. He knew something was wrong, however, as he was having problems breathing.

Being in the turret, he was not connected to the oxygen lines running throughout the bomber; he used portable oxygen bottles instead. The problem was that oxygen contains moisture, which freezes quickly at low temperatures.

All photos: Author's Collection

"We had seen up to negative 52 degrees before with few problems," Schrier recalled. "The oxygen line might have a bit of icy slush in it, but we would massage the tubing with our hands and have no breathing problems. On this day, it was frozen solid. Nobody ever told us those oxygen bottles would freeze up. We were young and didn't think of those things. They didn't at minus 52. I knew something was wrong because I wasn't breathing right.

"I called up to Lieutenant Lauro," he remembered, "and said I was going to get out of the turret and told him why. He understood and knew it was bad by the way I was breathing. I made up my mind to go to the radio room where there was an extra mask. I called to Nelson King, the radio operator, on the intercom, to get a mask ready for me. I finally got everything unplugged and headed for the radio room. I crawled to the room, got my hands on the doorknob, and remembered nothing else for a while."

King came out of the radio shack and, with help from with right waist gunner Bill Heathman, pulled Schrier to an outlet where they could plug a mask into the main oxygen lines. Both King and Heathman were now on portable oxygen bottles, not knowing that the bottles were the cause of Schrier's breathing problems.

King struggled to get the oxygen mask over Schrier's face and helmet. As the mask was a different type from the one Schrier had been wearing, it would not fit onto his helmet. King fumbled with his heavy gloves trying to get the mask in place. The oxygen mask hooked onto two small fittings on the helmet in the old-type system the crews first used, and it was an old-type mask King was trying to fit to Schrier. The only thing King could do was to tie the mask around Schrier's helmet. To accomplish this, he had to shed his multiple layers of gloves, exposing his hands to the frigid air.

As King was doing this, Heathman became exhausted, getting no oxygen from his ice clogged bottle. He crawled toward his waist gun position, helped by the other waist gunner, Gerald Will, who had also hooked into one of the troublesome bottles. Will was having breathing problems and would soon pass out. Heathman was able to call forward for help before he too passed out.

Meanwhile, King's bottle had also clogged with ice, and as he finished the job of tying the mask to his ball turret gunner's helmet, he toppled over on Schrier. Oxygen was now finally coming through to Schrier, however.

Lieutenant Lauro had a major problem. Four of his crewmen were now out of action. Not getting a response from anyone in the rear of the plane, he sent Greasamar and bombardier Walt Green back to check on the four men. As if all this were not bad enough, Lauro noticed the number two engine acting up as several German Focke-Wolfe Fw-190 fighters eased up to the edge of the group's formation.

If the Germans had known of the situation inside the B-17, they would have surely attacked the easy target. The fighters made one run at the B-17 formation, but navigator Emery Horvath and top turret gunner Dewey Thompson sprayed them with enough machine-gun fire to deter their return.

Meanwhile, Greasamar was hard at work in the radio compartment getting oxygen to Schrier and King, while Green was helping Will and Heathman. Schrier revived first, and Greasamar was able to get him up into the co-pilot's seat. Schrier explained that Lieutenant Lauro gave him a funny look, so he told him what was happening. Schrier's electrical suit was not working, and the longer he sat there the colder he got.

"My whole dang body was shaking at one time," he remembered. "Lieutenant Lauro told me to talk to him and I said I couldn't."

It took a while before the shivering stopped, but now Schrier realized he could not see. The moisture in and around his eyes had frozen. Had he spent much more time in that cold, he would have lost his eyesight.

Greasamar was facing a much worse problem assisting King, whose bare hands had been in the cold for approximately 20 minutes. His hands were not frostbitten, they were frozen. With Green assisting Greasamar now, both crewmen worked to get oxygen to King. Greasamar put King's hands inside his armpits to warm them. It was too late

King eventually came to, but his hands were numb. He began to thrash around the radio compartment, lashing out with his numb fists, which by now had swollen to the size of grapefruits, trying to bring feeling to them. As he hit the sides of the ship, bits of frozen flesh flaked off like chunks of ice. King's hands did not bleed and would not until they were within sight of the English coast and below 5,000 feet altitude.

The bomber was met by ambulances and doctors as it landed. King was immediately taken to the hospital. Schrier was also taken in for a medical examination, but was back in the Fortress in time for the next mission. Both

Heathman and Will were okay, having passed out for only a short time.

"I didn't see King's hands until we got down on the ground," Lauro later said. "Frostbite was no word for what happened to his hands. One of the flight surgeons looked at them, and I looked at the doc, and what he must have been thinking wasn't pretty. King saved Schrier's life with those hands."

As a token of their admiration, the crew named their plane the *Nelson King*. King was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action while serving as a radio operator and gunner.

The second memorable mission came on March 6, 1944, to the "Big B"—Berlin. After the war, Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring said that the day he saw Americans over the skies of Berlin, he knew "the jig was up." Monday, March 6, 1944, was that day.

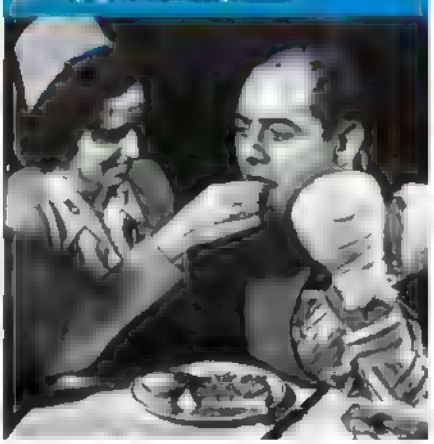
After their early wake-up call, the airmen made their way to the base operations buildings and their briefing rooms. In the early morning cold, they chatted loudly, both to help keep warm and to steady nerves. Those nerves quickly became unraveled when the briefing officer pulled back the curtain over the map of the day's mission. The map had red tape marking the route that went on and on and on—eventually to Berlin! The targets were the Bosch works, the Erkner ball bearing plant, and the Daimler-Benz aircraft engine factory. The Eighth Air Force was delving for the first time deep into the heart of the Third Reich. Allied leaders knew that the Germans would defend their capital city

Allied air strategists were willing to sacrifice bombers to entice German fighters into the air to take on Allied fighter escorts. They hoped to substantially weaken the Luftwaffe in a war of attrition as the Germans lost fighters and experienced pilots they could not replace.

Casualties came early on March 6 as a Consolidated B-24 Liberator of the 392nd Bomb Group ran into a patch of mist just off the end of the runway, struck a tree, and burst into flames. All crewmen were lost. Bombers that followed had to fly past the burning wreckage.

Once over the English Channel, all gunners fired off short bursts to test their guns. One B-17 of the 385th Bomb Group had a cartridge case from an aircraft above smash through its nose and had to turn back. Over the North Sea, 44 other bombers dropped out for various reasons. Eighteen B-17's of the 384th Bomb Group were crowded out of their formation by another bomb group and were unable to catch their group in order to fly in the protective box formation. All 18 abandoned the mission and returned to base.

ABOVE: Lieutenant Joe Greasamar served as co-pilot aboard the B-17 bomber during crewman Nelson King's efforts to save other men who had lost their oxygen supply. BELOW: Sergeant Nelson King lost fingers and parts of both hands when he exposed his skin to sub-zero temperatures in an effort to save fellow crewmen aboard his B-17 bomber. OPPOSITE: Lieutenant Joe Greasamar poses with other Eighth Air Force members of the 100th Bomb Group. Behind them at an airfield in England sits an icon of the air war over Germany and Occupied Europe, a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber.



The box formation theoretically gave bombers sufficient firepower to ward off attacks. The formation was made up of 21 bombers divided into three squadrons: the lead squadron with six, the low squadron with another six, and the high squadron with nine aircraft. The high and low squadrons flew on opposite sides of the lead, with the formation taking the shape of the letter V but tilted at a 45 degree angle as viewed from the rear. The entire flight of hundreds of bombers was divided into boxes to give mutual protection from roving bands of German fighter planes. This was maintained for the entire flight.

The Eighth Air Force sent close to 1,500 fighters and bombers into the air that day. Included was Combat Wing 13B of the 418th Squadron, 100th Bomb Group, and the *Nelson King*. Wing 13B was broken into lead, high, and low squadrons with a total of 21 B-17s taking off from Thorpe Abbotts. The *Nelson King* was the lead plane in the lead squadron. Wing 13B flew adjacent to Wing 13A, 12 miles behind Wings 4A and B and 12 miles ahead of Wings 45A and B. Six wings comprised the 3rd Bomb Division, consisting of 252 B-17s.

The 1st Bomb Division, 315 bombers, led the way followed by the 3rd, with the 2nd Bomb Division, 243 bombers, flying caboose. This flying freight train of death stretched for over 96 miles.

For this important mission, Lauro again piloted the *Nelson King*, but sitting in the righthand seat was Captain Jack Swartout. With the *Nelson King* guiding the lead squadron of Wing 13B, Swartout's reputation as a fighter pilot and one of the best lead pilots in the 100th Bomb Group made him a natural to assist Lauro and crew. Regular co-pilot Joe Greasamar moved to tail gunner, a position for which he was not trained

The mission went smoothly until the *Nelson King* crossed the North Sea. There, the gap between the 4th A and B Wings (leaders of the 3rd Division) and the 13th A and B Wings (middle of the 3rd Division) grew from 12 miles to 20 miles

In addition, the pathfinder bomber leading the 1st Bomber Division developed radar problems. The 1st Division and the 3rd Division back to and including the 4th A and B Wings had drifted south of the planned route. Given the 45-mile-per-hour wind, the 1st Division was drifting away at the rate of one mile for every two minutes of flying time.

The navigator had adjusted the 3rd Bomb Division for the wind and with radio silence being enforced assumed that the lead group was merely gaining ground on the others, not heading on an entirely separate path. The *Nelson King* soon became the lead plane in the lead squadron of not only its box, but also the entire remaining bomber force.

Luftwaffe ground tracking and radar posts saw the gap between the groups as well. The Luftwaffe borrowed tactics for the bombers and their fighter escorts from the German Navy and its ability to concentrate U-boats into a "wolf pack" when launching an attack. To do this against escorted bombers, the Germans would attack with the greatest number of fight-

ers in a concentrated space. If the bombers had escorts, generally three groups of fighters attacked. Each group typically consisted of 30 to 40 fighters. Two groups would attack the fighter escorts, and the other would attack small groups of bombers.

The Germans pilots knew the best attack positions, given their strengths and the bombers' weaknesses. By this stage of the war, they always tried to attack from a head-on position or in a high-speed dive from above, coming into a level position. If they attacked from the rear (which the B-17's were designed to protect), they faced up to six .50-caliber machine guns. However, if they attacked directly toward the front and from a 12 o'clock position, they usually had to face only one or two machine guns. The German fighters needed to average 20 hits with 20mm cannon rounds to knock out a bomber from the rear; that average dropped to four or five from the front. Usually a single hit anywhere in the nose was good enough to send the bomber down.

With a closing rate of 200 yards per second, there was little time to line up a clear shot, but the German fighter pilot had a much larger target to sight than his counterpart in the B-17. The German pilot's goal was to make a half-second burst from his guns at about 500 yards from the bomber, then pull directly up to avoid ramming it.

Only eight Republic P-47 Thunderbolt fighterss protected the separated half of the 3rd Bomber Division, while 31 guarded the trailing 2nd Division. The Germans chose their target well. Their force came directly at the 3rd Division, Wing 13B with a total of 107 Me-109s and Fw-190s. The German fighters attacked like a swarm of bees, coming in waves, flying by so fast it was difficult for the B-17 gunners to get a fix.

Joe Greasamar, sitting in the *Nelson King* tail gunner position, fired his guns until they became too hot to touch. Having never had training, he just shot at everything. "The guns were so hot, they continued to fire after I let off the trigger," he explained. "The heat from the guns was causing the bullets to go off on their own."

Ten B-17's, each with 10 men aboard, went down with the first wave. Of the nine bombers in the high squadron of Wing 13B, six were trailing flames afterward. The attack took less than a minute.

"They came down from very high and on our right at tremendous speed, making long sweeps at us," said Lauro. "They came in five abreast and about 12 deep. All of them concentrated on our one group. We put up a terrific screen of fire. In wave after wave they poured down on us, five ships at a time, picking on just one or two bombers."

Just behind the wave, a single Fw-190 headed straight for the *Nelson King*. It fired, then pulled up just enough to clear the front of the bomber but not the rear. The Focke-Wolfe hit the *King* and tore off part of the vertical fin and rudder. Swartout felt the *King* shudder; even with both he and Lauro at the controls the bomber became incredibly difficult to handle.

With the *King* slowing, Swartout and Lauro dropped out of the formation. Realizing the crippled bomber would never make it back to England alone, they decided to trail the formation to Berlin. Swartout next dropped the bombs to reduce the weight, hoping to maintain as much airspeed as possible.

"Boy oh boy, they about got us today. This is the closest we ever came to not coming back. We got our ship all shot up but we got home. We were one of the very few to get back. We went to Berlin ... no wonder."

— Lieutenant Joe Greasamar

Again, all hell broke loose. "They just lined up tail to tail and started circling us like Indians used to make war on a lone covered wagon," said Lauro. "Occasionally one or two of them would peel off for a head-on attack. These were the worst of all."

A lone Me-109 showed up from out of nowhere and fired several of its 20mm shells at the *King*. One of them exploded in the right side of the cockpit, wiping out the instrument panel, the hydraulics, and the on-board radio communications and starting a fire.

"I'm hit, I'm hit," Swartout yelled, as he thought he was wounded. It didn't take him long to realize he was merely covered in hot, red hydraulic fluid, although the butt of the shell did hit him in the chest severely enough to knock his breath out. Engineer Dewey Thompson came down from the top turret to assist, attempting to put a tourniquet on Swartout, who signaled that he was okay.

The *King* had two engines out, the number three gas tank pierced, and the oil cooler line damaged. The ball turret was covered in oil, making it impossible to see out. The top turret was soon put of commission as well by another shot. The cables to no. 4 engine were shredded, and other systems were inoperative. The *King* could only reach a speed of 140 miles per hour. Anything more threatened further damage to the tail fin due to vibrations

The *King* was a sitting duck for the Germans. With the intercom out and a hole in the side of the pilot's cabin, the roar of the rushing air made it impossible to hear. Swartout looked at Lauro, tore off his headphones, and motioned that he was taking control of the plane.

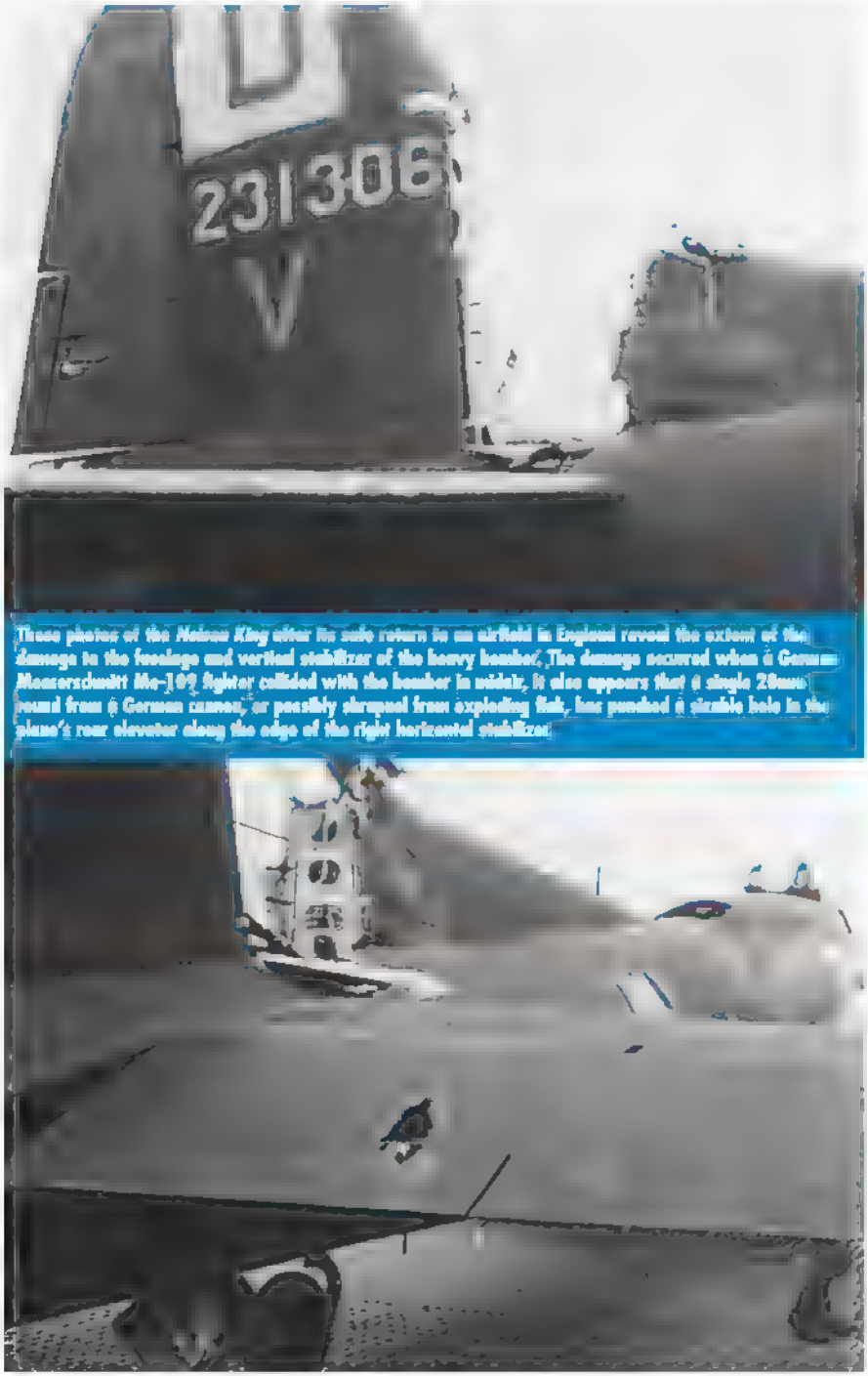
The crew prepared to abandon ship, but Swartout had other plans. He ordered them to be ready to bail out but to hold steady until at least he made an attempt to fly home. With fighter pilot skills acquired in a P-47, he worked to evade the frontal attacks by the fighters. It took all of those skills to carry on the mission.

With a good part of the oxygen system damaged, the rear gunners passed around oxygen bottles. Swartout guided the *King* toward Berlin, circumventing the flak and bombing runs, then intersected with the 390th Bomb Group that had just made its run.

Flying at a lower altitude, the Americans were below the flak bursts, but three shells blasted through their wings and burst high above. Enemy fighters were still lining up to finish them off. Swartout guided the *King* under the higher 390th and up the formation's side away from trouble. As the other bombers stayed in their box for protection, Swartout dipped *Nelson King* and moved from side to side of the 390th to evade the attackers. He did this for a long time, doing everything possible to keep the damaged aircraft from the Germans.

The Germans were known to fly into American formations with captured B-17s and shoot down or ram Allied planes. With the *King* flying the odd routes to evade enemy fighters, other B-17 crews wondered if it had German pilots. One airman kept calling the leader of the 390th, telling him that a weird B-17 was out there leading bandits to their formation. The leader told him to keep an eye on it and to shoot it down if it ran away. Then, when a damaged Lockheed P-38 Lightning eventually attached itself to the *King*'s left wing for protection, Swartout knew he would not be fired upon by Americans.

What few operational guns were left on the *Nelson King* were ready and waiting for another attack. It was then that a group of P-



These photos of the *Nelson King* after its safe return to an airfield in England reveal the extent of the damage to the fuselage and vertical stabilizer of the heavy bomber. The damage occurred when a German Messerschmitt Me-109 fighter collided with the bomber in midair. It also appears that a single 20mm round from a German cannon, or possibly shrapnel from exploding flak, has punched a sizable hole in the plane's rear elevator along the edge of the right horizontal stabilizer.

47s and North American P-51 Mustang fighters showed up, bringing a sense of relief to the beleaguered bomber's crew.

The *Nelson King* made it back to England. Its crew had suffered only two minor wounds. Of its 21-plane squadron, 11 did not return. They were the *Kind-a-Ruff, Lucky Lee, Spirit of '44, Sly Fox, Terry and the Pirates, Ronnie R, Pride of the Century, Goin Jessies,* plus the unnamed 238059 LD A and 231800 LD U. *Snort Stuff* landed safely in Sweden. These 11 incurred 43 casualties with an additional 57 becoming prisoners of war.

The March 6, 1944, raid on Berlin cost the Eighth Air Force 69 bombers and 11 fighters. The Bloody One Hundredth lost 150 crewmen. Thorpe Abbotts airfield was deathly quiet after the survivors landed and reports of the raid made their way out. A pall fell over the base. Many airmen wanted to be alone. Others drank more than usual that night.

The *Nelson King* did not land at Abbotts. The bomber was so shot up that patches of sky could be seen through the wings, tail, and fuselage. Air controllers refused to let it land and sent it on to the base at Honington, England, where it had to be completely made over.

Jack Swartout was awarded the Silver Star for his efforts in bringing the *King* home and saving the lives of his fellow airmen.

Joe Greasamar wrote to his parents that night. "Boy oh boy, they about got us today. This is the closest we ever came to not coming back. We got our ship all shot up but we got home. We were one of the very few to get back.... We went to Berlin ... no wonder," he finished his letter.

In May, a new crew headed by pilot Lieutenant Ehil J. Stewart took over the *Nelson King*. The *Nelson King* was shot down on May 24, 1944, near Wittstock, Germany, with three killed and seven taken prisoner. By the end of World War II, the Eighth Air Force would have more fatal casualties, 26,000, than the entire United States Marine Corps during the war.

The only serious casualty for the first crew was Nelson King, and he survived. King, losing part of his hands saving his buddies, spent almost two years in recovery. In 1947, Murray Schrier and Bill Heathman visited the man who saved Murray's life. King was living in Nebraska, farming, and had started a church.

In a series of surgeries, all of King's fingers and thumbs were gradually amputated along with parts of both hands. The surgeons slit a portion of each hand between the bones of the middle and ring fingers to create claws. This allowed Nelson to write and drive a car. Schrier said King told him that he held no animosity toward anyone for the predicament he got into that cold day in November and lived with his handicap peacefully for the rest of his life.

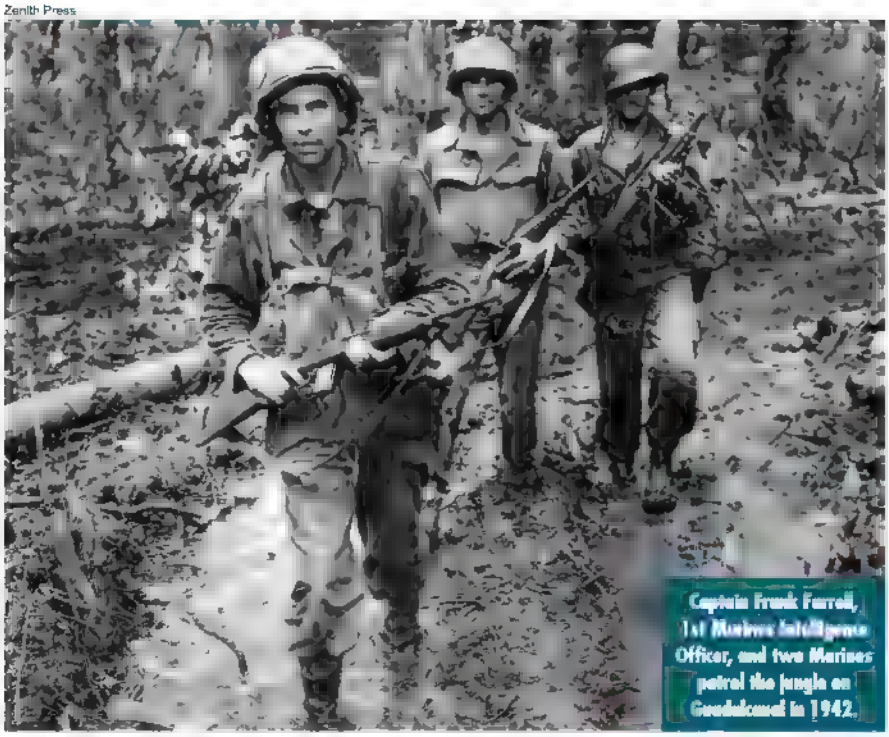
The tour of the original *Nelson King* crew ended in early April 1944. Initially, it was to last 25 missions, but as casualties mounted it was increased to 26 and later to even more. Due to a shortage of ball turret gunners, Murray Schrier had to fly 26 additional missions in Italy, where the odds of survival were improved.

With the end of their tours, the crew automatically became members of the Lucky Bastard Club, for those lucky enough to survive the flak and Luftwaffe and live to tell the tale. Schrier, with 52 missions to his credit was a Double Lucky Bastard.

Keith Buchanan is a graduate of Davidson College and also earned a master's degree from Appalachian State University. He is a former professor at Appalachian State University as well. This is his first article for World War II

By Christopher Miskimon

Zenith Press



Captain Frank Farrell, 1st Marines Intelligence Officer, and two Marines patrol the jungle on Guadalcanal in 1942.

Shadow Warriors

U.S. Marine special forces found action across the globe during World War II.

THE CONCEPT OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES WAS A NEW ONE DURING World War II. These units performed a combination of espionage and unconventional warfare in support of the larger strategy of achieving victory. The various groups adopted distinct names to signify their elite status, Commandos, Rangers, and Raiders to name a few. The men who filled such groups were themselves above average, and naturally they often came from organizations already considered elite.

Shadow Warriors: The Untold Stories of American Special Operations During WWII (Dick Camp, Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2013, 246 pp., maps photographs, notes, index, $30.00, hardcover) reveals the contributions of the United States Marine Corps to this new order of soldiers.

The book begins with the lesser known exploits of Marine Corps personnel in the North African and European Theaters. Even before America's entry into the war, preparations were being made for its eventual involvement. A Marine Colonel, William "Bill" Eddy, was placed as a naval attaché, which at the time was a position synonymous with that of a spy. A decorated veteran of World War I, Eddy bore wounds from that conflict that caused him to limp.

Despite his injury, Eddy retained the energy to work vigorously in the service of his country. He was placed in the Middle East because he had been born there to missionaries; he used all the experience of his upbringing to promote U.S. goals in the region. From Cairo, Eddy was sent to Tangier in January 1942. There he created a network of agents and made preparations to pave the way for Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. After this he was sent to Saudi Arabia as an emissary, where he coordinated the meeting between that nation's king and President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945.

Marines also took part in combat in North Africa along with Eddy's spying. During the Operation Torch landings, the ports of Arzeu, Oran, and Algiers were the subject of special operations involving American soldiers and Royal Navy ships. These groups would enter each harbor in an attempt to seize them intact and without extensive fighting. At Arzeu and Oran, a small group of Marines was detailed to assist with the landings because of their experience in ship-to-shore operations. While Arzeu went relatively smoothly, Oran turned into a debacle. Stiff French resistance caused heavy casualties among the attackers; the survivors were captured but freed shortly afterward as Vichy resistance collapsed.

Another realm of special operations was OSS activity in the Balkans, and Marines were there as well. Captain Walter Mansfield parachuted into Yugoslavia and joined with the Chetniks, a royalist resistance faction opposing the occupying Germans and the communist partisans under Tito. Mansfield acted as an adviser to General Draza Mihailovich, the Chetnik leader, joining his fighters in the hills and mountains where they hid. The Marine went with them on operations, fighting beside them until British goals for the region resulted in a loss of aid to the Chetniks. This forced Mansfield to withdraw from Yugoslavia; he spent the rest of the war in the Far East. Other Marines served with the French Resistance, risking capture and hardship.

While the exploits of the Raiders are well known, they are retold here in good detail, with a complete discussion of the Marine Special Forces. The Raiders were an unconventional group intended for fast strikes and rapid movement. Several battalions were raised and used heavily in the first year of the Pacific War. Their first action was the raid on Makin Island, a test which, though controversial, created their legend. Further actions at Tulagi, Gavutu-Tanambogo, and on Guadalcanal cemented their fame and made them the stuff of legend in the Corps to this day

The exploits of Marine parachute units are also recounted. A final chapter tells of the exploits of Marines who parachuted into China as the war ended. These men dropped into territory still controlled by the Japanese to clean up the surrender and shut down remaining espionage activities.

The book is well written with an eye for detail. The points of view of officers and enlisted men alike are woven into the narrative, giving a top to bottom view of the actions described.

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Israel and the United States

Is Israel an asset or a burden to our country?

The United States is without question Israel's most important ally. Also, without question, Israel is the staunchest and most reliable friend of the United States. But there are some who believe and vigorously advocate that Israel is a burden to the United States and that, were it not for Israel, peace would prevail in the Middle East.

What are the facts?

The "Israel lobby." There are indeed those who claim that Israel is a liability, a burden to our country. Professors from prestigious universities write essays in which they aver that the United States is in thrall to the "Israel lobby." This lobby is said to pull the strings of American policy. Its supposed main promoters are AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the so-called "neo-cons," some of whom are indeed Jewish. They are said to exert an almost magical spell over policy makers, including the leaders of Congress and the President. Some even say that the Iraq war was promoted by this omnipotent "Israel lobby," that the President Bush was flummoxed into declaring war on Saddam Hussein, not in order to defend the United States or to promote its interests, but in order to further the interests of Israel.

> "Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values will bind Israel and the United States forever."

Israel is indeed a major recipient of U.S. aid. Israel receives yearly $3.0 billion, all of it in military aid – nothing in economic aid. 75% of this military aid must be spent with U.S. military contractors, making Israel a very large customer of those companies.

America's staunchest ally. A good case can be made that aid to Israel, all of it military, should be part of the United States defense budget, rather than of the aid budget because Israel is, next only perhaps to Britain, by far the most important ally of the United States. Virtually without exception, Israel's government and its people agree with and support the foreign policy objectives of the United States. In the United Nations, Israel's votes coincide with those of the United States over 90% of the time. The Arabs and other Moslem countries, virtually all of them recipients of American largess, almost reflexively vote against the United States in most instances.

Israel is the major strategic asset of the United States in an area of the world that is the cradle of Islamo-fascism, which is dominated by tyrants and permeated by religious obscurantism and shows almost total disregard for human rights. During the decades-long Cold War, Israel was America's indispensable rampart against the inroads of the Soviet Union. It is now the bulwark against the aggressive intentions of Iran. During Desert Storm, Israel provided invaluable intelligence, an umbrella of air cover for military cargo, and had personnel planted in the Iraqi deserts to pick up downed American pilots.

Gen. George Keagan, former head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, stated publicly that "Israel is worth five CIAs," with regard to intelligence passed to our country. He also stated that the yearly $3.0 billion that Israel received in military assistance was worth $50 to $60 billion in intelligence, R&D savings, and Soviet weapons systems captured and transferred to the Pentagon. In contrast to our commitments in Korea, Japan, Germany, and other parts, not a single American serviceperson needs to be stationed in Israel. Considering that the cost of one serviceperson per year – including backup and infrastructure – is estimated to be about $200,000, and assuming a minimum contingent of 25,000 troops, the cost savings to the United States on that score alone is on the order of $5 billion a year.

Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank. Its superb harbor, its outstanding military installations, the air and sea lift capabilities, and the trained manpower to maintain sophisticated equipment are readily at hand in Israel. It is the only country that makes itself available to the United States in any contingency. Yes, Israel is not a burden, but a tremendous asset to the United States.

Israel is indeed America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East and the indispensable defender of America's interests in that area of the world. The people of the United States, individually and through their Congressional representatives, overwhelmingly support Israel in its seemingly unending fight against Arab aggression and Muslim terror. But that support is not only based on the great strategic value that Israel represents to the United States. It is and always has been based on shared values of liberty, democracy, and human rights. America and Israel are aligned by their shared love of peace and democracy. Israel and the United States stand together in their fight against Islamo-fascist terrorism. These shared values, these common ideals, will bind Israel and the United States forever.

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Gerardo Joffe, President

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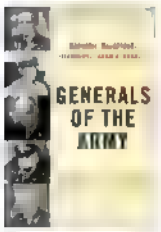
The chapters on Tulagi and Gavutu are particularly interesting, as most histories mention them only briefly. The material on Marine involvement in espionage and the OSS is seldom seen elsewhere. Overall, the book paints a good picture of the unconventional operations and conventional fighting Marine Special Forces took part in in all theaters of World War II.



Generals of the Army: Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Arnold, Bradley edited by James H. Willbanks, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 2013, 254 pp., maps, notes, photographs, $35.00, softcover.

This is a collection of concise yet thorough biographies of five men whose contributions earned them America's highest modern military rank. In the long history of the United States Army, only five men have held the rank of General of the Army, colloquially known as a five-star general. All of them served during World War II, with three serving into the start of the Cold War. The authors are all faculty members at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. At different times all five of these top generals attended this school, known as the "intellectual center of the Army."

The rank of General of the Army has been used and discontinued at various times during America's history. The latest incarnation began in December 1944, when it was reinstituted to give American generals parity with British field marshals. In 2010, a series of coins was authorized for production by the U.S. Mint honoring the five men, and this book is intended in part to accompany their issuance.

Each of the five generals had their own experiences in the Army with the crucible of the staff college as a shared experience. Marshall spent much of his lieutenancy on Mindoro in the Philippines during the insurrection. Likewise, MacArthur began in the Philippines as an engineer, but his affiliation with that country continued for decades. Eisenhower served under MacArthur as a staff officer for several years. Hap Arnold became one of the Army's first fliers after beginning his career in the infantry. During the Great Depression, Omar Bradley ran a camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

The book is well organized and researched. Each biography is a good summary of the man's life, service, and importance. Volumes have been written on each of these generals; this work provides readers with what they need to know in a single tome.

Attack on Pearl Harbor: Strategy, Combat, Myths, Deceptions, Alan D. Zimm, Casemate, Philadelphia, PA, 2013, 464 pp., photographs, notes, appendices, index, bibliography, $18.95, softcover.

Most books on the Pearl Harbor attack describe it as a well-conceived, professionally executed attack on the American fleet. They cite the enormous damage done, the way it was concealed from the U.S. intelligence apparatus, and the meticulous planning conducted by daring Japanese officers as evidence of the plan's genius and actual success. For those who have studied the battle closely there is a different view and that opinion is now finding its way into print. This major work

Simulation Gaming

BY JOSEPH LUSTER

Wargaming's aerial combat gets some mobile assistance and Ubisoft takes us back further with a great war experiment.

PUBLISHER
Wargaming

DEVELOPER
Wargaming

SYSTEM(S)
iOS, Android

AVAILABLE
Now

WORLD OF WARPLANES ASSISTANT

The full retail version of Wargaming's *World of Warplanes* launched with plenty of fanfare. Seriously, some fans weren't even able to contain themselves, with seven of them celebrating the game's launch via a trek to the Himalayas. Perhaps there's no better way to commemorate a high-altitude dogfighter than actually climbing to a high altitude—as high as 5,000 meters, specifically—and stopping for *World of Warplanes* breaks along the way. It seems like some wild publicity stunt, especially with the added touch of planting a *World of Warplanes* flag on one of the peaks, but it wouldn't be the first time fans have taken their enthusiasm for something to such great heights.

As for *World of Warplanes* itself, Wargaming recently launched a mobile app in an attempt to keep the fun going even when you're away from the game. *World of Warplanes Assistant* offers on-the-go access to information on things like battles and personal in-game statistics, and a further look into the expansive library of aircraft. Detailed info on all the game's vehicles lets players compare warplanes of the same class and look up specs, and these particular features can be used when offline as well as on.

Players can also have a look at *World of Warplanes*' leaderboards within a selected aircraft class via *Assistant*. If it all sounds like something for the pilot who just can't put the game down, well, that's precisely what it is. While *Assistant* won't necessarily be of much use to the more casual aerial daredevils out there, it can serve as a nice distraction for those who are slightly more, shall we say, obsessed with every facet of the action. It's also a pretty handy tool for info and specs on the various aircraft from Germany, the Soviet Union, United States, Japan, and Great Britain that can be found in the game.

Wargaming has done an admirable job of keeping things exciting enough for everyone who stuck with *Warplanes* through its beta testing and beyond. Since there was quite a bit of practice to be had over the testing period, *World of Warplanes* almost immediately saw some action in the form of post-release tournaments. The initial contest took place over the weekend just prior to Thanksgiving, and offered up in-game Gold as prizes. The first place winner left the skies with 20,000 Gold; pretty solid spoils for a bit of time spent lighting up opponents in the virtual cockpit.

examines Pearl Harbor from conception to aftermath and evaluates it with a critical eye.

Far from a homogenously agreed upon plan, the Japanese staff officers who examined the idea of attacking Hawaii were largely against the idea, calling it reckless and even foolish for Japan to carry out the attack. Many of the pilots assumed they would never return once they left the flight decks of their carriers. Also, was the attack as effective as planned? Sixteen battleships and cruisers were present that morning, but only five battleships were sunk. Three of those were later refloated, making their loss only a temporary reversal. While the Japanese must receive credit for successfully undertaking such a complex operation in the first place, have the myths and stories of Pearl Harbor inflated its history beyond what is deserved?

At the risk of perhaps being charged with "revisionist history," the author has done a credible job in attempting to show the attack for what he believes it was: a victory, but not a perfect one, in ways different from the account generally given today. The book is well researched, and the arguments are presented logically. Anyone who has ever been a military staff officer will recognize that the author, a former U.S. Navy officer, has experience in this field. This is an excellent book for a reader wanting a well-reasoned argument on the subject rather than a straightforward historical accounting. Whether swayed by his case or not, the reader will enjoy the level of detail and passion for the subject.

The Battle of Midway: The Naval Institute Guide to the U.S. Navy's Greatest Victory, edited by Thomas C. Hone, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2013, 360 pp., maps, photographs, notes, index, $38.95, hardcover

Battles that are considered "turning points" naturally receive much attention from historians and writers, often to the point that reading about them becomes stale. Midway is one such battle; literally hundreds of books, documentaries, and articles have been created around the famous defeat of the Japanese carrier force in June 1942. While this vast coverage is well deserved, it can be hard for an interested student of the engagement to pick and choose from these myriad sources for in-depth study. This new book gives the reader a collection of diverse writings on the subject, compiling articles, excerpts, official records, oral history, and personal letters related to America's defining naval triumph.

Each chapter is a separate work from a different author, and there are 53 of them in the book, giving a varied perspective from both scholars and participants. The Japanese view of the battle receives attention through translations, including pieces written by high-ranking Imperial Navy officers involved in the fighting. Attention is paid not only to the actual events of the battle, but also to the personalities of the commanders and the non-battle efforts such as codebreaking.

Mission 85: The U.S. Eighth Air Force's Battle over Holland, August 19, 1943, Ivo De Jong, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 2013, 223 pp., maps, photographs, index, $28.95, softcover

The air war over Europe is most famous for its large-scale, destructive and costly raids such as the fire bombing of Dresden and the attacks on the oil fields of

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montpellier

SYSTEM(S)
PC, PS3, Xbox One

AVAILABLE
2014

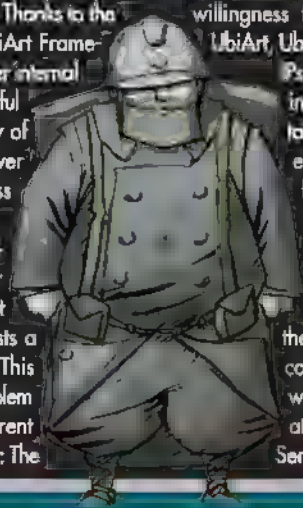
VALIANT HEARTS: THE GREAT WAR

While its subject matter predates that of our typically World War II-themed games, it's worth casting a glance toward Ubisoft's upcoming *Valiant Hearts: The Great War*. In a bold and original move, *Valiant Hearts* takes inspiration from love letters written during World War I, with the story following four strangers who head into the battlefield in an effort to help a young German soldier find his love.

According to Ubisoft's announcement, which was expanded upon after the official reveal of the game at this year's Digital Days event, *Valiant Hearts* tells a tale of "survival, sacrifice, and friendship." The gameplay centers on puzzle-solving, with stealth elements thrown in as players attempt to stay alive while sneaking through enemy lines. The five playable characters, which include the lovelorn German soldier, are joined by a faithful canine companion. Together they work to survive "while doing their best to hold onto their humanity in the face of loss and tragedy."

Putting it that way, especially in the context of its setting, makes *Valiant Hearts* seem a bit dark. Ubisoft promises more lighthearted, and even comical, moments throughout, though, which makes sense considering the developer and the framework upon which the game is being built. Ubisoft Montpellier previously worked on the lively, gorgeous 2D platformers Rayman Origins and Rayman Legends. Both games employ the magic of UbiArt Framework, an engine that lets artists be artists. Thanks to the way it's set up, UbiArt Framework allows a smaller internal team to cook up artful games for a variety of platforms with fewer resources and in less time.

As a result, budgets are also smaller on games like Valiant Hearts, which boasts a team of just 15. This addresses a big problem at large in the current video game industry: The willingness to take risks. With UbiArt, Ubisoft can test out new IPs at a lower risk, leading to more experimentation than most engines would allow for at that level. At a time when production costs are only going up, it's heartening to see some of the bigger companies continue to look for ways to remain creative and competitive. Seriously, some of the independent studios out there are starting to embarrass the big kids!



Valiant Hearts: The Great War is due for a 2014 release on PC, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, and Xbox One. If Ubisoft Montpellier manages to deliver something truly engaging and memorable with the project, hopefully we'll start seeing war games that deal with the subject matter in even more intriguing ways. After all, there are many more sides to war than what we've seen in most interact entertainment up to this point, so let's see just how creative we can get in exploring them.

Ploesti and the ball bearing factory at Schweinfurt. The lesser raids, however, are often lumped together in the general histories of the conflict. The day after the Schweinfurt raid there was a relatively small attack on some Luftwaffe airfields in Holland that turned into an ordeal for those involved

The mission was expected to be a "milk run," simple compared to the larger raids on Germany. Royal Air Force Hawker Typhoon fighters would sweep the area around the targeted airfields to thin the German defenses. After this, Martin B-26 Marauders and North American B-25 Mitchell bombers would hit the enemy airfields.

Damaging these airfields would hurt the overall air defense of the Third Reich; one officer, a group commander, thought it was important to get back in the air quickly after the disaster over Schweinfurt and show the Germans that U.S. air power was still in the fight. The raid proved much harder than anticipated and turned into a stiff battle in the air over Holland.

This work in wholly devoted to this one day of fighting. Using accounts from pilots on both sides of the battle, the author puts together a detailed narrative, almost a blow-by-blow description. Aviation buffs will enjoy this book for its rich descriptions and extensive veteran accounts.

Kohima 1944: Battle Story, Chris Brown, Spellmount, Gloustershire, UK, 2013, 156 pp., maps, photographs, index, $17.95, softcover.

One of the decisive battles of the China-Burma-India Theater was fought around the town of Kohima and on a ridge that bore the same name. As part of the Japanese U-GO offensive, the operation sought to achieve victory over the local Commonwealth forces before the war turned even further against them. Beginning in April 1944, the Japanese 31st Division attacked the British around the town. The stubborn British troops doggedly held their positions, and the fighting devolved into a siege. The difficult fighting led to the battle being nicknamed "The Stalingrad of the East." The siege ended with an Allied counterattack that threw the poorly supplied Japanese soldiers back and began the long road to victory in Southeast Asia.

This book is part of the *Battle Story* series by this publisher. It is organized into chapters covering the history leading to the battle, the details of each army, the battle itself, and the aftermath. Short sidebars reveal details of key personalities, weapons, and equipment. The entire book is easy to read and follow, and the author effectively explains the strategic importance and effects of the Battle of Kohima and the U-Go offensive. The loss suffered by the Imperial Japanese Army had lasting effects on its efforts elsewhere. This is a concise and interesting introduction to an engagement relatively unknown to many today.

Under the Eagle: Samuel Holiday, Navajo Codetalker, Samuel Holiday and Robert S. McPherson, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2013, 266 pp., photographs, notes, index, $19.95, softcover.

This biography covers the life and military service of Samuel Holiday, who became one of the now famous Navajo codetalkers during World War II. This group of Native Americans used its distinctive language to transmit coded radio messages that Japanese intelligence was unable to decipher. Holiday and his comrades served at Kwajalein, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. In one case on Saipan, a Marine unit occu-

New and Noteworthy

Vanished: The Sixty-Year Search for the Missing Men of World War II, Will Hylton, Riverhead Books, 2013, maps, $27.95, hardcover. On September 1944, the crew of a Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber disappeared in the Pacific. The search for the missing crew is chronicled in this work that spans decades.

Churchill's Bomb: How the United States Overtook Britain in the First Nuclear Arms Race, Graham Farmelo, Basic Books, 2013, $29.99, hardcover. Before the war Winston Churchill predicted the world's nuclear armed future. Afterward, however, he sacrificed Britain's lead in developing the atomic bomb.

Shrapnel: A Memoir, William Wharton, William Morrow, 2013, $23.99, hardcover. William Wharton wrote several novels of World War II. This book is his memoir of his time in the Army in Europe.

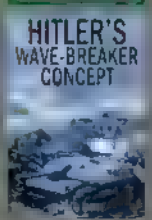
Churchill and the King: The Wartime Alliance of Winston Churchill and George VI, Kenneth Weisbrode, Viking Press, 2013, $26.95, hardcover. The alliance between Great Britain's king and prime minister helped carry the nation through the dark years of World War II. This book relates their cooperation.

The Admirals: Nimitz, Halsey, Leahy, and King — The Five-Star Admirals Who Won the War at Sea, Walter R. Borneman, Back Bay Books, 2012, $18.00, softcover. These four men are the only men to wear five stars in U.S. Navy history. Together they led the Navy to victory.

The Devil's Garden: Rommel's Desperate Defense of Omaha Beach on D-Day, Steven Zaloga, Stackpole Books, 2013, $27.95, hardcover. New research is included in this look at D-Day from the German perspective. The focus is on Rommel who oversaw the preparations.

The Battalion: The Dramatic Story of the 2nd Ranger Battalion in WWII, Colonel Robert W. Black, Stackpole Books, 2013, $27.95, softcover. The author is an expert on Ranger history. This work covers the 2nd Battalion's long and storied service.

Hitler's Wave-Breaker Concept: An Analysis of the German End Game in the Baltic, Henrik Lunde, Casemate Publishing, 2013, $32.95, hardcover. This is an analysis of German Army Group North and its defensive efforts as the war turned against Germany, pointing out the causes of its failure to defeat the Soviet armies.



pied Japanese positions after the enemy retreated and radioed their higher headquarters to tell them so. The headquarters thought the message was a Japanese ruse and began shelling their own men. The shelling was stopped because a Navajo codetalker sent a message to cease fire, something the Marines naturally appreciated.

The book goes beyond the narrow focus of Holiday's military service. As a biography it includes many other details of his life, which influenced his actions and beliefs. After the war he returned to civilian life with all its hardships and prejudices. Over time he joined with other veterans and codetalkers, and eventually the nation gave recognition. This book is unique in having an actual codetalker as an author; such veteran-produced books are increasingly important as this generation of Americans passes away. Soon there will be none left for historians to interview or documentarians to film, and books such as these will be only primary sources for the experience of World War II.

The True German: The Diary of a World War II Military Judge, Werner Otto Muller-Hill, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2013, 240 pp., notes, index, $25.00, softcover.

As World War II drew closer to defeat for the Third Reich, a German Army judge began keeping a diary containing his thoughts and concerns about the war and the direction his nation was going. Werner Muller-Hill was 60 in 1945 and had been a lawyer all his life, serving as a military judge in both world wars. He was critical of Hitler and the Nazi regime and often handed down lighter sentences than National Socialist doctrine called for. At the same time, he seemed to care mostly for Germany as a state, not for the plight of the Jews or the moral dilemma Germany found itself in as a result of Nazi rule.

What makes this book of interest is not just its criticism of the Third Reich. Reading it causes one to wonder why the judge kept it. Had this diary been found by Nazi authorities he would have faced execution. One possible answer is that Muller-Hill wanted to distance himself from what he knew to be the losing side. At the same time, he was obviously proud to be a German and his moral outlook reflected this. To modern readers he comes across as prejudicial at times, but this is actually one of this work's strengths. Self-serving or not, the reader can get a first-person glimpse at the words of a man wrapped up in the ethical dilemma of Nazi Germany. □

madagascar

Continued from page 61

sea, exchanging fire all the way. It was a breathtaking adventure for all involved—one no one wished to repeat.

Once ashore, the marines quickly realized that the commandos were conspicuously absent—they were on their own. Under the direction of Captain Martin Price, they entered the town spraying bullets and flinging grenades in every direction. An artillery headquarters was overwhelmed. Then a number of fires were set, creating such confusion and commotion that the French believed that a much larger force had indeed been landed. The blitz continued unabated until stopped by a fusillade of small arms fire originating from a naval barracks. Several marines edged forward and tossed grenades through windows, compelling the occupants to come out with hands up.

A squad rushed in to ensure the building was vacant only to discover a number of British soldiers captured in earlier actions. After securing enemy weapons, these men were integrated into the ranks. But Captain Price now faced a conundrum. Even with the addition of the liberated prisoners, his meager force was experiencing great difficulty keeping tabs on its numerically superior Vichy captives. As a result, Price suspended his rampage and formed a defensive perimeter near the dockyards to await Sturges's columns. Throughout the night the marines monitored the distant battle sounds and wondered when relief would arrive, if at all.

While Price laagered at the docks, events accelerated at the Joffre Line. The balance of Tarleton's 17th Brigade as well as Festing's 29th Independent Brigade passed through the victorious Seaforths and Northamptons and pushed on toward Antsirane. Both brigades entered town practically unopposed and scoured the streets of what little resistance remained and at little cost. Shortly after midnight the eerie wail of bagpipes pierced the darkness as both Scots Fusilier battalions closed in on the Governor's House, convincing a few frightened Malagasy to emerge with hands held high. Governor General Annett was not present.

An hour later, elements of the Welsh Fusiliers entered the Defense Headquarters and rousted Colonel Pierre Clarebout and Captain Paul Maerten, the ranking Vichy army and navy commanders, and marched them out at gunpoint. About the same time, a hearty cheer was heard from the dockyards where other Welshmen completed the link with Captain Price's marines. For all practical purposes Antsirane was now in British hands and the battle all but over.

At daybreak, General Sturges entered town and negotiated a cease-fire with Colonel Clarebout and Captain Maerten, which ultimately induced the surrender of Forts Caimans and Bellevue as well as the coastal batteries that studded the Orangea Peninsula. By then, 13th Brigade had arrived to assist with the consolidation. With the big guns negated, the fleet entered the harbor and the following morning Admiral Syfret accepted the surrender of all Vichy forces in Northern Madagascar. Diego Suarez was finally under Allied control.

From the outset it was hoped that Operation Ironclad could be accomplished easily and with minimal casualties. Instead, it had taken three days—two of them devoted to intense combat in which 105 British soldiers lost their lives and 284 others were wounded, plus four missing in action. The Vichy forces also suffered. Of the estimated 4,000 defenders, 145 were reported killed and 336 wounded.

For all intents and purposes, this concluded Operation Ironclad. The 13th and 17th Brigades soon departed for India to join their parent 5th Division. Meanwhile, Governor General Annet remained loyal to the Vichy government and vowed continued opposition from the island's rugged interior. As a result, another campaign was launched that September, culminating two months later with Annet's ultimate surrender. Overall, both campaigns had cost British and Commonwealth forces 135 battle deaths and 394 wounded, not to mention those missing or the many who succumbed to tropical diseases.

In the end, Operation Ironclad, the first major British amphibious undertaking since Gallipoli, proved to be for naught. The perceived threat of Japanese occupation proved to be hollow. They had never intended to occupy Diego Suarez. But in the spring of 1942, the threat seemed genuine to beleaguered Britain and the operation justified. To do nothing seemed suicidal.

Madagascar was among the final battles of an undeclared war between Great Britain and Vichy France. The British fought with their customary doggedness, the French with valor and determination. In time, the entire campaign became a footnote, then a fading memory, and finally committed to obscurity. Who remembers Madagascar? □

Author Cleve C. Barkley writes from his home in Loraine, Illinois, with a focus on military history. He has written one book and a number of articles and has advised other authors regarding their works on World War II. This is his second contribution to WWII History.

best

Continued from page 35

24 hours apart at Best.

After their surrender, Wierzbowski and his men were led behind German lines where they saw large numbers of enemy wounded needing medical help moving to the rear. Laino was bleeding too badly to continue when one of the German soldiers helped to bandage and carry the blinded man to their destination. They were dropped off on a mound of dirt guarded by two Germans when the same soldier who had dressed Laino's wounds earlier returned from battle seriously shot in his shoulder. The paratroopers helped him as best they could and were finally moved to a German field hospital between the highway and Best, about 500 yards from the front. It was a busy and chaotic place with the high number of German casualties arriving, and the aid station staff became more excited when British tanks began their attack.

The Americans saw an opportunity and managed to disarm the few German guards on duty, capturing the hospital. They took nonessential Germans with them as prisoners; they agreed to go along willingly as long they remained prisoners of the Americans and not the British.

Wierzbowski's small and valiant band crossed the highway and scurried into the 502nd lines while the German surrender was occurring, adding their own number to the bag of enemy soldiers captured that day. They had traversed a small circle in distance from their jumping off point in the Zonsche Forest two nights earlier but completed a long journey hard to match in daring, sacrifice, and commitment to duty.

Following the surrender of German troops on September 19, attacks on the 502nd lines diminished considerably overnight and into the next day. Best soon became unimportant in the greater conduct of the war and remained in German hands for another month, the Allies having a bigger problem to contend with trying to defend the wedge toward Arnhem created by Operation Market-Garden.

Tiny villages like Best can scarcely be found in Holland today, 70 years later, but one noteworthy event does occur in towns and cities all across the country every year. At 8 PM on May 4, the people of Holland dedicate two minutes of silence in recognition of the soldiers and civilians who died during their country's four-year occupation by Nazi Germany. □

Richard A. Beranty is a U.S. Navy veteran and retired English teacher who lives in Kittanning, Pennsylvania.

insight

Continued from page 29

doing his job, died proving his conviction to his words. "He was firing one of the machine guns, but I was busy driving and couldn't see what was going on behind me," Don said.

With a dead crew member on each side, Don gripped the steering levers as LVT 41 churned across the reef and toward the Pocket. Every yard of the way, punishing hits from machine guns and near misses from 75mm dual-purpose guns pummeled the tractor.

"We got about halfway across the reef; then, the amtrac's engine just stopped. It was dead." So focused on his job of driving the LVT to the beach, Don was unaware that the other Marines in the cargo hold had been killed. He didn't know whether they died one by one as LVT 41 clawed across the exposed reef, or whether they died all at one time. He only knew that when he crawled out between the cab's two dead Marines, the macabre sight of 18 more dead Marines met him in the cargo hold.

"I was one of only three to get out alive—the maintenance sergeant, one Marine rifleman, and myself. The maintenance sergeant and the rifleman were both wounded. We had no weapons. We jumped out over the side and into the water and went to the back of the tractor."

Everything in the cargo hold, both humans and equipment, had been destroyed.

The history books accurately recount that Tarawa's LVT gamble was a tactical success. Only eight of the 42 first-wave LVTs were knocked out before reaching the beach. Don Crain knew all too well what it meant to be aboard one of those eight. "There were 23 of us in that tractor, but only three of us got out alive and lucky me without even a scratch. The dear Lord protected me."

Ironically, Don, a driver of a 20th-century amphibious assault innovation, ended up splashing through the surf to shore just like his Marine predecessors in their debut amphibious landing at Nassau in 1776. Unwilling to abandon the two wounded Marines, Don kept them alive until dark and then got the pair to a low seawall.

Ashore, Don joined the other Marines in wresting the island from the Japanese in a brutal 3½-day brawl that cost both sides dearly and practically annihilated the Japanese.

"I can recall about six or seven percent of Tarawa," Don said. "I block out the rest. What I still remember is the incredible noise and awful stench from dead bodies. You just can't forget that sort of thing. I also remember a Marine shot in the throat and unable to breathe. A corpsman cut an opening in his trachea and inserted a thermometer case to get him air and save his life."

When the dust settled after the 76-hour slugfest, only 17 of the over 4,000 Japanese defenders remained alive. The Marines paid dearly for the victory with 1,027 killed and 2,292 wounded. Three of the worst hit Marine units were involved in assaulting Red Beach 2. Don's 2nd Amtrac Battalion suffered 50 percent casualties, and by battle's end 90 out of its 123 amtracs employed had been knocked out.

Of the eight LVT-1s destroyed in the first wave on all beaches, six of those were destroyed attempting to land on Red Beach 2, Don Crain's LVT 41 among them. Finally, three of the four Medals of Honor awarded for valor at Tarawa went to Marines on Red Beach 2, to Lt. Col. Shoup, Lieutenant William Deane Hawkins, and Sergeant Bill Bordelon. Yard for yard, Tarawa was the Marines' bloodiest across-the-reef landing of World War II, and Don's attempted landing site of Red Beach 2 its bloodiest beach.

"The island stunk and reeked," Don said. The odor of almost 6,000 decomposing dead could be smelled miles offshore. Expecting to return to the *Virgo* on D-day, Don came ashore with only the clothes on his back. That assault uniform was now in tatters, so Don went in search of clean clothes.

"I found Lieutenant [Alexander] Bonnyman's pack. Inside was a fresh pair of dungarees," he remembered. Don put on the clothes not knowing who Bonnyman was, only that he was dead. After the war, when Bonnyman's name became legendary and synonymous with the highest of courage and sacrifice at Tarawa, Don attended a ceremony at Hawaii's Punchbowl Cemetery.

"I met Lieutenant Bonnyman's sister and told her about the clothes," he said. "She said she was thrilled that her brother was helping Marines even after he died." Bonnyman was awarded the Medal of Honor for his role in capturing the large sand-covered bombproof behind Red Beach 3. Clad in Bonnyman's clothes, Don remained on the island for a total of 19 days helping to salvage LVTs and unload the Army's garrison troops.

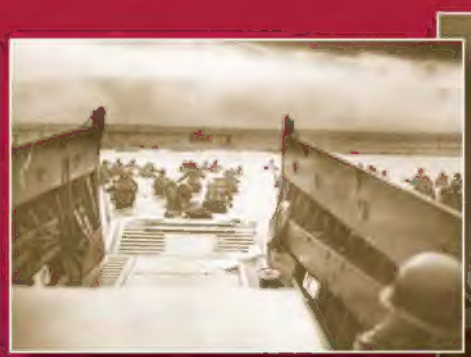
Immediately after the battle, press coverage of the role of the LVTs was censored to hide the Marines' new tactical innovation from the enemy. Don went on to survive an explosion at Pearl Harbor among LSTs loading for Saipan, earned a Bronze Star at Saipan for action in his LVT-2, and made 14 shuttle runs on Tinian. □

The Reverend Durk Steed serves as a middle school chaplain in Richmond, Virginia.

NORMANDY WEEKEND
WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE

2014

with an Experienced Historian



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